

FARMER GUIDE

CALF JACKETS PROTOCOL



Calf jackets keep calves warm, dry and healthy, in the winter when temperatures fall below 15°C. More energy is used to keep warm and less energy on development and growth. Remember, calf jackets do not replace good calf husbandry.

Influences on lower critical temperature

- **Genetics of the calf** - A Jersey calf will feel 'cold' before a Charolais calf
- **Birth conditions** - A premature born calf with a low birth weight will feel the cold sooner.
- **Health** - Poor health will make the calf feel colder, faster.
- **Nutrition** - Good colostrum management will help build a calves' immune system.
- **Air speed** - Air speed of less than 1m/s is suitable. A draft through the shed is negative and will promote cold stress.
- **Dry bedding** - Clean dry bedding is essential for calves to keep warm. Damp bedding extracts energy from the calf to keep warm.

Considerations when buying calf jackets

- Breathable material
- Water resistant or waterproof
- Machine washable.
- Adjustable straps and fasteners with low maintenance.



Calf Jacket Protocol

1. Using a thermometer, monitor and record the min – max temperature in the calf shed & reset every day during the autumn & winter months
2. Decide on a set trigger temperature for your system, eg 10°C
3. Set protocol at which the calves will start to experience cold stress e.g 3 consecutive nights with temperature below 10°C
4. Young calves (< 3 weeks of age) are most susceptible to cold stress, therefore assess them first
5. Only put jackets on dry calves
6. Place clean jackets on every calf below 1 week of age and on entry to calf house
7. Make sure the jacket fits the calf so that it covers the calf's body from neck to tail
8. Adjust the straps according to growth.



Reference: Information supplied by Jamie Robertson, Calf Jacket Protocol 2016, Livestock Management Systems Ltd.

Removing jackets

Removal of jackets will be entirely dependent on weather and appetite of each calf

1. Be aware not to remove jackets too early
2. Set protocol for removing jackets based on age of calf and ambient temperature
 - 1 week old >15°C
 - 2 weeks >5°C
 - more than 3 weeks >2°C
3. Refer to recent night-time minimum temperatures
4. Remember to consider individual calf condition; feed intake, health, growth rate
5. Remove calf jacket in morning not afternoon

Management Tips

1. To preserve body heat ensure calves have enough dry bedding to nest
2. Monitor jackets for cleanliness and replace soiled or wet jackets with a clean, dry one
3. Remove dirt from jackets with a hose or light power-wash, if necessary pre-soak
4. Jackets must be washed at 40-50°C with detergent and dried thoroughly between each use.