FEED FOR GROWTH™

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FARMER GUIDE

Protecting young calves from cold stress

Temperature matters

- Young calves are very susceptible to low temperatures
  - They are on highly digestible feed and are not yet ruminating (so less heat is generated by digestion)
  - In the first week of life, calves will start using energy from feed to keep warm at temperatures less than 15°C
    - High risk calves (difficult birth, twins) will feel cold at higher temperatures
- By the 4th week calves are more robust and will not 'feel the cold' until about 0°C
- High moisture levels and increased air speed (draughts) will dramatically increase the susceptibility to cold stress
  - Draughts of only 5mph will make calves feel 8-10°C colder

Impact of cold stress in young calves

- Energy is diverted from growth to maintaining body temperature
  - Growth rates will decrease
  - Increased susceptibility to disease

Preventing cold stress

- Have a plan for when cold stress is likely to happen
  - When ambient temperature drops below 15°C
  - At higher temperatures for high-risk calves
- General housing considerations
  - Provide effective barriers to draughts at calf-level
  - Provide calves with places to shelter
  - Plastic and timber are better insulating materials than concrete and steel
  - Promote drainage of moisture
  - Provide calves with plenty of bedding to keep them dry and allow them to 'nest' in the straw
- Specific intervention measures
  - Provide calf jackets
  - Provide external heat source close to calves
  - Increase feed rates during periods when cold stress is likely
    - Increase volume fed
    - Increase concentration of milk powder

Volac Milk Replacers Limited
50 Fishers Lane, Orwell, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 5QX, UK
+44 (0) 1223 206207 | orders@feedforgrowth.com | feedforgrowth.com