



WELCOME TO
**farm
 2015
 news**



DECEMBER 2015



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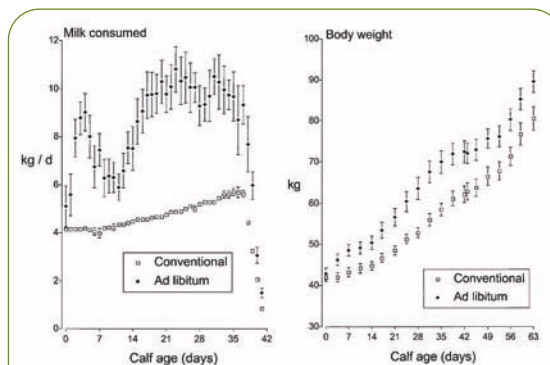
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Festive Feasting!

Carolyn Baguley MA VetMB CertAVP (Cattle) MRCVS

Have you ordered your Christmas turkey yet? Sprouts been on since September? Christmas pudding gently soaking in a good brandy? As you sit down to your festive feast, spare a thought for your dairy calves and how much they'll get to eat and drink this Christmas!

One of our focuses this year has been on so-called 'accelerated feeding' in calves. Conventional practice has been to feed calves 10% of their body weight, i.e. approximately 4L per day, split over two feeds, but calves will drink far more than this (sometimes more than twice as much) when given the choice, and gain extra weight accordingly (see graphs). The extra milk intake can reduce concentrate and forage intake before weaning, but this shouldn't be used as an excuse, since the differences disappear after weaning and the early weight gains are maintained. We know that there are correlations between increased weaning weights and reduced ages at first service and first calving.



The graphs clearly show the increased milk consumption and increased body weight achieved with ad lib feeding compared to conventional feeding (10% bodyweight). Graphs reproduced by kind permission of Jasper, J. and Weary, D. M., from their 2002 article 'Effects of Ad Libitum Milk Intake in Dairy Calves', Journal of Dairy Science 85(11): 3054-3058.

10% body weight for today's calves is really not enough, even for - especially for! - the very young. Aim for at least 6L whole milk, or at least 900g milk powder, per day, split over two feeds, for at least the first 3 weeks of life. Weight gains in the first 8 weeks of life should be reaching at least 800g per day.

Give your calves a white Christmas this year. Give them more milk.



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Please note that telephone calls are recorded for quality and monitoring purposes.



1st calving heifers:

What age to aim for, and why

Chantal Bryant BVM&S BSc MRCVS

Everyone knows the Goldilocks story, where everything has to be 'just right'! This also applies to rearing heifers for maximum productivity. The aim is to have a fit animal, reared at minimal cost, to give a live calf, milk well and get back in calf within three months.



Christmas Opening Times

Christmas Eve: 8.30am - 12.30pm

Christmas Day: Closed

Boxing Day: Closed

Sunday 27th: Closed

Monday 28th: Closed

From Tuesday 29th: Open as usual

Friday 1st January: Closed

From Saturday 2nd: Open as usual



Markeaton

Christmas Coffee Morning

Join us on Friday 11th December for our Christmas Coffee Morning at the Scarsdale Farm & Equine practice, Markeaton Lane, Derby.

We will have cakes, tea & coffee, mulled wine and carols. You can also take advantage of a 10% discount on shop products whilst you are here.

10am-1pm



Age at first calving has long-term effects on heifers' lactations and reproductive performance. In the UK, the current average age at 1st calving is 28.8 months. The recommended age for first calving, however, is 24 months - this gives optimal milk yields, better conception rates and less mastitis. Younger heifers will have a reduced milk yield, poorer conception rates and a shorter lifespan. Older heifers may have poorer fertility. Every day that the age at 1st calving extends beyond 24 months costs £2.87, meaning that the average farm spends an extra £413.28 before their heifers are giving anything back.

However, age is not everything! A heifer must be big enough at calving, and in Holsteins this means calving in at around 560kg. To calve down at 24 months heifers need to be in calf

at 15 months, and to achieve this your heifers must have a good start in life and be fed sensibly to maximise growth. Every farm will have a few smaller animals that, even when 15 months old, are not big enough to be served. These smaller animals will need to be served later to allow them to grow, which means they are behind before they have even started. Many farms weigh their heifers regularly, others will use other techniques such as marks on the wall. Whatever method is used, it is important to keep track of heifer growth rates. If they are monitored it is possible to make sure you hit the targets and adjust management where necessary.

In the words of Goldilocks, we want a heifer that is not too small, not too young, but just right!

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year
from all the Scarsdale Team