Giving calves a head start in life

Green Acres farmer Pat Bowden has completely revamped the calf housing facilities on his farm, writes Gordon Peppard.

Pat Bowden on the Farm in the Calf to Beef Programme

**THE SCIENCE OF GOOD VENTILATION**

Good ventilation is calf shed is critical. The aim is to reduce air speed and calf heat load, but to control atmosphere and ensure that the calf has access to fresh air. The result should be no draughts or cold spots.

Calf houses need to be sufficiently draught proofed so that there is no draught at calf level. The perfect ventilation system will ensure that fresh air can be provided for the animals. A covered canopy will ensure that no rain water could get back into the shed.

It is essential to have a good outlet so that excess heat, water vapour, dust, gases (ammonia, methane, carbon dioxide), bacteria, viruses and dust can be removed from the shed. The inlet on each side is 22 degrees this will give the best performance in terms of moving air as any rain that gets in will wet the calf bed and affect performance. The inlet on each side is approximately five feet out from the back wall can help reduce draughts. Canopies at the back of the pen, especially at the points where the calves are expected to lie. If the house of your preference are worst when you stand up then the bedding is too wet for the calves.

Good ventilation is shed is critical, and is critical for good respiratory health. The inlet on each side is 22 degrees this will give the best performance in terms of moving air. The inlet on each side is approximately five feet out from the back wall can help reduce draughts. Canopies at the back of the pen, especially at the points where the calves are expected to lie. If the house of your preference are worst when you stand up then the bedding is too wet for the calves.

**Calf to Beef Programme**

**Feeding Space & Water**

Milk feeding will take place at the front of the pen where Pat can feed the calves from the same passage without having to travel. Weight gain and development will be kept to the same level as on grass, and the calves are also more regular. Also it may well be working the animal best, and may have to be the same as when the animal is on grass. The daily intake of the first calf group is around 1.5mL/kg liveweight, and is increased by 10% from the second group onwards.

**Draughts**

Draughts at calf level need to be avoided and especially in young calves by reducing their body temperature and making the calves feel cold in the calf shed.

**Fresh Straw**

Fresh straw should also be moved over the top of the shed to increase the temperature and provide ventilation. Fresh straw and fresh air are essential to prevent respiratory infection in calves.

**Drip Feed Systems**

By allowing the calf to eat from the same passage without having to travel, Pat can get the calves fed the same amount of milk per day, and it will be more in line with their natural feeding habits.

**Waste Disposal**

With a two lock gap in an eight inch space there will be 35 degrees of fresh air can be provided for the animals. A covered canopy will ensure that no rain water could get back into the shed. This will be filled with pea gravel, so that the liquid can run out to a seepage tank at the front of the shed. There is a cover which will prevent water vapour from being moved over the top of the shed and can have a preventative effect against calf respiratory infections. A cover will also keep wind off the calf and can prevent respiratory infections. If a cover is not present at the back of the shed, rain water will get back into the shed. It is essential to have a good outlet so that excess heat, water vapour, dust, gases (ammonia, methane, carbon dioxide), bacteria, viruses and dust can be removed from the shed. The inlet on each side is 22 degrees this will give the best performance in terms of moving air. The inlet on each side is approximately five feet out from the back wall and can help reduce draughts. Canopies at the back of the pen, especially at the points where the calves are expected to lie. If the house of your preference are worst when you stand up then the bedding is too wet for the calves.