**MANAGEMENT OF PURCHASED CALVES**

**PURCHASED CALVES**

- Calves should be at least 14 to 21 days old and have good weight for age (45 to 50 kg at 2 weeks of age).
- Choose calves that have been fed sufficient colostrum.
- Select calves from as few sources as possible.

**MANAGEMENT OF PURCHASED CALVES AT ARRIVAL ON FARM**

- Check calves for signs of illness.
- Within 2-3 hours of arrival on farm feed a good rehydration electrolyte as a first feed.
- Take rectal body temperatures.
- Take sick animals to a sick pen for diagnosis and possible treatment by or upon advice of a veterinarian.
- Treat calves with temperatures over 39.5°C (103.1°F).

**Consult with your vet regarding choice of vaccine against calf pneumonia. Vaccines should be handled and stored according to the manufactures directions.**

- No vaccine will give 100% protection against a disease.
- Vaccines are a preventative not a cure.
- The most common reason for vaccine failure is incorrect use of the vaccine.

**Make a herd health plan with your vet before buying calves.**
We often put up many reasons as to why not to calve heifers at 24 months such as if they calve at 2 years they will not calve again at 3 years. The table above doesn't really support this notion. Heifers that calved at 23-26 months had as good a calving interval and calved down again as a second calver as heifers calving down in the older age categories.

Another reason is that they are harder to calf at a younger age. The figures do show that younger heifers do have slightly higher calf mortality. On the same token heifers irrespective of age will be more difficult to calve and as the figures show will need a high level of assistance at calving.

Perhaps this could be reduced if we were more selective in the sires we put on heifers. Even the younger calving heifers are being mated with sires with an average calving difficulty of 4.7%. Interestingly our dairy counterparts try and mate their heifers calving down at two years with sires with a calving difficulty of 2% or less. We may never drop that low on the beef side but should we aim for 4% calving difficulty or less on heifers.

Heifers that calved for the 1st time at 23-26 month had greater survivability in herds with almost 40% reaching 5th parity compared to only 4% of those that calved for the 1st time at 31-35 months.

**KEY POINTS**

- Heifers that are to calve down at two years of age will:
  - Come from the best cows in the herd and be sired by bulls with strong maternal traits.
  - Be born early in the calving season to allow them to be heavier at bulling.
  - Need to achieve a daily liveweight gain of 1.1-1.3kg/day up to weaning.
  - Have to be fed to achieve 60-80kg liveweight over the first winter so they will need good quality silage plus 1-2 kg of concentrates.
  - Be turned out early in spring to grass to achieve good weight gain in the run up to bulling.
  - Have reached 60% of their mature weight by bulling.
  - Be bred to a known easy calving sire (ideally < 4% calving difficulty).
  - Have achieved 80% of their mature weight at calving.

**HOUSING:**

- Reduced environmental stresses
- Provide dry draught free housing
- Over-stocking should be avoided
- Ventilation must be good to reduce the burden of infection and risk of mortality
- Dry, draught free housing will reduce the environmental stresses on calves and adequate air changes resulting from good ventilation reduce the infection load on the calves.

**HEALTHY CALF CHECK LIST**

- Buy healthy calves (known source)
- Healthy coat
- Feed 1: Feed electrolytes
- Feed 2: 100% calf milk replacer
- Give multivitamin injection
- Vaccinate against pneumonia
- Place calves in a dry well-bedded pen that is draught free and yet adequately ventilated
- Keep clean fresh water available at calf’s head height
- Place fresh palatable concentrate with calves
- Keep a good “Stockpersons’ eye on purchased calves for the first 10 days
- Deal with any signs of sickness promptly
- Biosecurity – maintain