



CALVES



ACTIVITIES

SELECTION

- Select a calf from a nice-looking cow of good parenting age wherever possible. It is likely to inherit some of the parents good qualities (health and temperament). In general, the child should take over responsibility for the care and feeding of a calf no later than 2 weeks after birth.
- Give the calf a name and record it's birthday

The calf should have some protection from the weather.

Provide it with a warm waterproof shed that has a clean dry floor.



FEEDING THE CALF

- It should be fed on the colostrum milk from its mother for the first 4 days.
- The farmer will be the best one to tell you how much milk to feed your calf – and you will need to review this at regular intervals because your calf will grow very quickly. As a general rule, after feeding your calf will look 'full', his/her tummy will look round and the calf will be happy
- Calf Meal - Meal is fed in the mornings, after your calf's milk feed. You will need a large, flat-bottomed feeder which your calf can't push around the paddock.
- Although the supply of grass, hay and meal increases as your calf grows, it is still important to keep feeding milk as this ensures your calf will have a 'bloom' (shine) on its coat when it competes at calf club.
- Ensure all the drinking buckets / bottles / teats are thoroughly cleaned after each feed. Dirty equipment can mean sick calves and expensive vet bills.

DAILY CARE

- Make a cover from a clean sack. A cover benefits the calf in cold weather but remember to remove it on hot days. A cover also helps to remove loose hair and keeps the calf's coat fine and free from lice. Give the cover an occasional wash.
- Check the calf's shelter for cleanliness.
- Feed the calf regularly and ensure clean fresh drinking water is available at all times.
- Make feeding time grooming time. From 3 weeks old, rub over the calf's body with your hands while it is drinking. At the first sign of loose hair, brushing should commence. Two brushes—one semi stiff and the other soft are desirable.
- Handling and leading at feedings times rapidly develops an affinity between the animal and the child. Don't be too anxious about making the calf lead in the early stages. Talk to it in a friendly way while feeding and gradually get it accustomed to its halter and to walking freely. Never pull or drag the calf as once it develops into a "puller" it is very hard to remedy.
- After the third week, provide some clean hay daily.



WEEKLY CARE

- Devote some extra time each week to an overall grooming of the calf. Don't overlook brushing underneath the 'tummy', between and down the legs. Use a damp cloth to clean hooves, ears, nostrils and under the chin where dried milk usually accumulates.
- Watch for scouring — if your calf's motions become runny, very pale in colour and/or smelly it could mean it has scours. If this happens, immediately tell your parents or the farmer as it will need antibiotics from a veterinary surgeon to get better.

- Check to make sure the cover doesn't become too tight.
- Check for lice. Infection causes a rapid decline in both the general health and bloom of the calf. During grooming, look for lice on the neck, brisket and between the back legs. If discovered early, these small black creatures can be easily eradicated using a lice powder—bought from a vet or a rural store. Read the manufacturers directions before application.
- When a calf begins to eat hay/meal/pellets, provide a little fresh amount each day.



PREPARING THE CALF FOR AGRICULTURAL DAY

Training your calf to lead

Make a halter — A simple halter suitable for the training period and the Ag Day can be made out of a length of soft rope.

Example: Use a string to learn how to make [this halter](#). Tie a loop 8cm long at one end and another the same size a few centimetres from it. The cord between these two loops is placed over the nose of the calf. The long end goes round its head and back under its jaw, passing through the two loops.

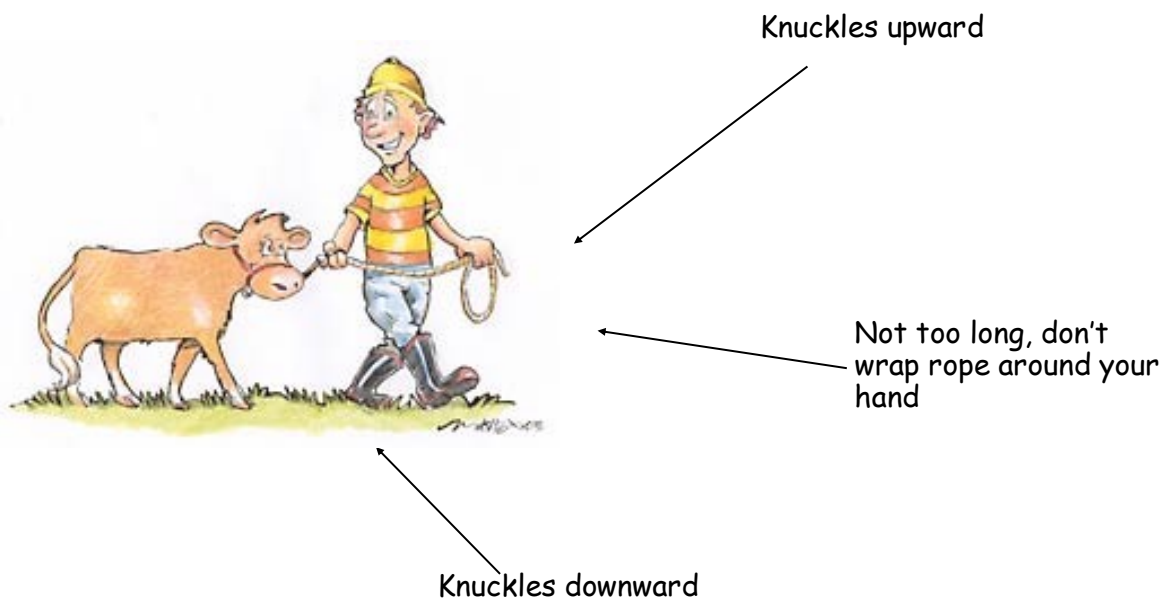
When the calf appears to accept the halter, you can begin teaching it to lead. There are several ways to do this – you can pull and tug, or you can get Mum or Dad to help you tie a long soft rope into a big loop – big enough to fit around your calf's bottom, under its tail, with the lead coming over it's back and through the loop on the halter.

- Now, when you pull the lead, the rope will come up under the calf's tail and it will move forward. As it moves forward, the pressure under it's tail stops, and so it learns to move forward. This way often trains a calf in a shorter time than any other method.

Basically, you are going to train your calf to do three things on the lead – to walk forward alongside you, to turn when required, and to stop.

1. Position of the calf when leading

You want your calf to walk to your right, and for its head/shoulder to be alongside you. Your right hand holds the rope close to the halter (around 15-25 cm away from the side of your calf's head), with the rest of the rope in your left hand so it is not trailing on the ground where you or your calf can walk or trip on it. Remember never to wrap the rope around your hand – *this is very dangerous* as it could mean you are dragged if the calf gets a fright and attempts to run away from you.



2. Turning

If you have followed the steps described above, you will have your calf moving happily forward with you. Now you have to learn to turn the calf. Remember you are on the outside of the calf when it turns, so you need to push its head towards the new direction as you begin to make the turn – and remember, the turns need to be very big at the start as your calf won't be used to this new movement and you don't want it to become unbalanced and trip or it would get a fright and lose confidence in you.



3. **Stopping** — you also need to learn how to stop your calf.

This is done by a gentle pull on the lead rope and shouldn't be done suddenly which would give your calf a fright. Let it know you're going to stop, by giving gentle tugs on the rope, and then a long pull, fixing your feet on the ground and leaning back a bit so the calf feels your weight on the rope – don't give any hard, sudden pulls on the rope though as this would hurt the calf's nose. Remain stationary (still) for a minute or more – the calf only moving forward again when you decide to.

Leading in preparation for Calf Club

At calf club you will have to lead your calf in a large square, walking it around pegs in the corners and doing a complete circle around one peg. You also have to stop the calf and make it stand still so the judge can look at it closely. Practise these movements – and don't forget the 'standing still' training!



Teaching your calf to tie up

You should train your calf to tie up. For the first attempts, use the long, soft looped rope, but do not 'tie' the other end to a post – simply wrap the end of the rope around a post and keep hold of it. The calf may pull back, but the rope will come up under its tail and it should walk forward. When it does, make a fuss of it, release the rope and go for a walk. Repeat this each day, briefly, until the calf does not pull back. You can then tie the calf, with the proper lead rope, to the post. In the early days of tying up, don't walk away from the calf as it will just try to follow you, instead groom and talk to your calf.

Grooming

- You will need some grooming equipment – a bucket, some soap or animal shampoo, a small piece of old towel or sponge (for washing), one of Mum's old towels (for drying) and a soft brush (for grooming).
- Each day, remove the calf's cover and brush it all over – remember you are brushing the hair, removing dirt and dust, not rubbing the skin so don't push too hard as your calf will move away from the pressure of the brush. Calves normally love this time, as the brush removes all the itches from its coat and also get to those 'hard to reach' places that its hooves can't reach, or it can't scratch on posts or branches of trees.
- Only wash your calf on a warm day and with plenty of sunlight so its coat dries before the day becomes dark and colder. Use a mild soap, rinse well and remove all excess water and rub dry.

JUDGING

You must present the calf in spotless condition

- coat clean and thoroughly brushed so there are no loose hairs or dust
- feet clean – remember to wipe any earth from its hooves
- clean around the outside of its ears
- clean around its nose and eyes
- clean halter and rope.

The calf, of course, has to be well behaved and stand still to allow the judge to run his/her hands over its body.



The judge may ask you some questions about the calf – it's name, when it was born, what it's breed is, and what you have been feeding it.

The judge will also be looking at your calf to see if it is a good example of its breed, and a great example of a future dairy or beef cow.