



Caring for your Ag Day Calf



## Feeding

For the first three or four days of its life, your calf should drink colostrum. Right from the start, your calf will need feeding twice a day – in the morning before school and in the afternoon after school. If you live on a dairy farm you can of course get cow's milk to feed your calf. Many of you will need to purchase calf milk formula and mix it with warm water. It is very important to keep whatever equipment you use to feed your calf, completely clean – calves can get a tummy bug called scours (diarrhoea) from dirty feeding equipment, so clean everything after feeding with hot soapy water and rinse thoroughly.

## How much to feed

After feeding, your calf will look "full", its tummy will be round and it will be happy, not calling for milk. A common rule is 10% of body weight, so a 40kg calf needs 4 litres each day or 2 litres twice a day. It is important to mix powders to the correct levels, so make sure you read the instructions on the packet carefully. Be sure to feed your calf at the same time each day, as it won't take long for it to know when dinner time is!

## Calf meal and hay

Your calf will grow quickly and begin to nibble grass and drink water. At around two weeks of age you will want to introduce calf meal and hay to its diet, so it grows well and stays in good condition. Meal is fed in the mornings, after the milk feed. You will need a large flat bottomed feeder for the meal, which your calf can't push around the paddock. Although the supply of grass, meal and hay increases as your calf grows, it is still important to keep feeding milk as it ensures your calf will have a "bloom" on its coat when it competes at Ag Day.

## Weaning

At two or three weeks of age, milk feeding can be reduced to once a day preferably in the morning. The amount of milk generally increases so your calf is getting one larger drink of milk each day. Calves generally remain on 'once a day' milk feeds until after Group Day.

## Fitting a calf cover

Calf covers serve two purposes – they keep your calf warm and dry and also flatten and polish its coat, preventing fading from the weather, meaning your calf will have a shiny coat when it gets to Ag Day. They can be purchased from your local veterinary centre or supply store, or you can make your own easily made from empty meal sacks – but first check that the sack is not made of plastic as it doesn't "breathe". A light soft blanket sewn into the inside of the cover will ensure your calf is warm. Velcro straps sewn onto the front and back will allow you to remove it easily for grooming and will also allow for an increase in size as your calf grows. The ideal cover should cover your calf from its shoulders to its rear. Be sure to watch for rubbing.

## Fitting a halter

Calf halters and leads can be purchased from your local veterinary centre or supply store. They are made of soft leather and can be adjusted to fit very small and large calves. Halters are only left on for around one hour each day, leaving it on longer would rub hair off. As soon as possible after your calf arrives, fit the halter. When fitted correctly, you should be able to fit two fingers between any part of the halter and your calf's skin. It should be firm if the calf pulls back.

The best time to put the halter on is just before feeding, when the calf is distracted by the milk and so will forget about the halter.



## Ag Day Competition – Calves

### Leading

A Judge will be watching your calf to see how obedient it is, so you will want your calf to be leading well and obeying your instructions, to turn and stop. Never walk in front of your calf.

### Rearing & Grooming

The Judge will be looking to see how well your calf has been reared (fed, groomed and cared for). You must present the calf in spotless condition.

- Clean, thoroughly brushed coat, so there are no loose hairs or dust.
- Clean feet and ears and around its nose and eyes and under its tail.
- Clean halter and lead.
- The calf 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 your calf – its name, when it was born, what breed it is, and what you have been feeding it etc.

**Gordonton**  
P: 07 824 2103  
**Huntly**  
P: 07 828 7660

**Maramarua**  
P: 09 232 5891  
**Matamata**  
P: 07 888 8068

**Morrinsville**  
P: 07 889 5159  
**Ngaruawahia**  
P: 07 824 8630

**Ngatea**  
P: 07 867 7256  
**Paeroa**  
P: 07 862 8815

**Raglan**  
P: 07 825 8390  
**Te Aroha**  
P: 07 884 8014

**Te Kauwhata**  
P: 07 826 3581  
**Thames**  
P: 07 868 7005



# Ag Day Calf Rearing Tips

Keep a close eye on your new pet, and if anything changes, get your parents to check it out. Make sure you keep all the gear and bedding clean and dry.

It is very important that you have good hygiene when working with your animal. There are diseases you can catch if you aren't careful, so make sure you always wash your hands and wear protective clothing, especially if your animal is sick.

Talk to your vet about the best time to get your animal vaccinated and treated for parasites. If it's a boy you'll need to think about when to get him castrated as well.

Calf horn buds need to be removed (this is called disbudding) at about two weeks of age. All animals **MUST** be given effective pain relief at the time of disbudding, regardless how old it is. This means, at a minimum, local anaesthetic must be used, but it is also a good idea to provide longer acting pain relief (such as a long acting anti-inflammatory) to keep your pet comfortable.

Talk to and pet your animal. The friendlier they are, the better they will perform for you at Ag Day.

Start off by fitting your animal with a halter or collar. Once they seem comfortable with this you can begin teaching them to walk with a lead. Your animal should be trained to walk on your right, with its head/shoulder level with you – you don't want to be pulling them and you don't want them to be pulling you!

Don't let the lead drag on the ground, and never wrap it around your hand as you could get really hurt if they suddenly start running.

Stopping should be slow and smooth, without tugging sharply on the lead. Practice standing still, and only allowing the animal to move forward again when you are ready. This is important so that the judge has time to look at your animal when you go to Ag Day.

Once you are happily walking straight, start practising turning. You should lead on the outside of the curve, and the turn needs to be quite large, to begin with.

Training should be fun for both you and your animal. Make sure to train every day, but not for so long that either of you get bored or tired.

Remember you are on display as well, and judges will be looking for signs that you are comfortable with, and care for your animal.



Draw or stick a photo of your calf here

**My calf's name is:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Breed / Type:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Birth:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Feeding routine** (*insert dates*):

Two times a day until \_\_\_\_\_, then once a day until weaned.

**Training routine** (*tick when complete*)

- ☐ Happy to wear a collar / halter
- ☐ Happy being lead
- ☐ Walks beside you
- ☐ Can turn when you want it to
- ☐ Stops when you want it to

**Grooming and handling routine** (*tick when complete*)

- ☐ Likes to be brushed
- ☐ Is clean and tidy

**Animal Health checklist** (*tick when complete*)

- ☐ Disbudding \_\_\_\_\_ (*Date*)
- ☐ Castration \_\_\_\_\_ (*Date*) (*if applicable*)
- ☐ 6-in-1 vaccination \_\_\_\_\_ (*Date*)
- ☐ Lepto vaccination \_\_\_\_\_ (*Date*)
- ☐ Worm drench \_\_\_\_\_ (*Date*)

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## Leading Course

The animal rings will be:

Lambs & Goats 10 x 10

Calves 15 x 15 (to be set up on farm with standards on a flat area)

The correct leading course is as follows: -

