

Welfare and euthanasia

On-Farm
Research

Key Points

1. Good calf welfare is non-negotiable for all calf rearers.
2. The Dairy Cattle Code of Welfare (2010) sets minimum standards around calf welfare. Ensure all those involved in calf rearing are familiar with this code.
3. It may be necessary to humanely destroy calves - follow correct procedures. Ensure there are good practices around dead calf disposal.
4. Approved methods of Euthanasia are rifle, captive bolt and chemical euthanasia.



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While all due care has been taken in preparing these documents, people acting on this information do so at their own risk.

Calf Rearing Fact Sheet 1.6

Calf welfare

Good calf welfare underpins all successful calf rearing enterprises.

Investing in excellent welfare will pay dividends with low calf deaths, good growth rates and calves which grow into cows that are easy to handle. The Dairy Cattle Code of Welfare (2010) is very specific regarding the minimum care of calves. Some key points are:

- All calves must be fed colostrum within 24 hours of birth.
- All calves require a warm, sheltered environment with access to good quality water at all times
- Handle all calves gently and with care.

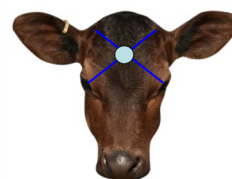
Euthanasia

- There will be times when it is necessary to humanely destroy calves. It is unacceptable to leave a calf suffering. On some farms it is policy to euthanase unwanted calves. It is important that there is a person on farm trained and capable of humane slaughter of calves.
- Approved methods of euthanasia are:

Approved method
Rifle



Approved method
Frontal Target



Blunt force trauma cannot be used to kill calves

Approved
method
Rifle

To minimize
the risk of the
bullet exiting
the body. Aim
the rifle inline
with the neck.



Approved method
Captive Bolt



Follow up to ensure death

- Bleeding out : Note – throat cutting is not an approved killing procedure. It is done after shooting with a rifle or captive bolt.
- When eyes are touched, dead animals have no blink reflex and no rhythmic breathing.
- It is important to confirm death after slaughter and re-check and confirm death again 5 minutes later.



- Note: a heartbeat may be felt 2-3 minutes after brain death.
- Dead calf disposal – have a plan. Most calves are disposed of in an offal hole/pit or in some regions a collection service operates. Dead calves may be worth selling to a ‘slinky’ buyer. Know what is available in your region.

Bobby calf welfare

There are some good ‘Best Practice Guidelines’ available refer <http://www.dairynz.co.nz/file/fileid/27767>

Painful procedures

- Disbudding and de-horning and castration must be done in ways that minimise pain and distress.
- Disbudding must be done by a veterinarian or appropriately trained personnel using a gas or electric cauterising iron with appropriate pain control (sedation/anaesthetic).
- It is best carried out as young as possible once the buds can be felt, usually at about 3 weeks.
- Consult your local vet and plan well ahead.
- Castration is best carried out as early as possible before 6 weeks (preferable 7-21 days) using a standard rubber ring. Use elastrators to apply the rubber ring to the neck of the scrotum. Ensure **both** testicles are in the scrotum below the rubber ring.

