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Farm Dairying



Holstein Calf

V.—Care of the Calf.

By LAURA ROSE, Demonstrator and Lecturer in Dairying at the Ontario Agricultural College, Guelph, Canada.

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HERE is a difference of opinion among farmers as to letting the calf suck the dam at all. Some take it away immediately, but the greater number leave the calf with its mother at least twenty-four hours after it is born. It is always safer to allow it to stay that length of time unless the cow is known to be tuberculous, in which case the calf should be removed right away and not allowed to be licked by its mother or to drink any of her milk. Tuberculosis is not hereditary, but may be contracted.

To touch a calf to drink let it get quite hungry first, then insert two fingers in its mouth and lower its head into the pail. Calf feeders can be bought and are liked by some. If the calf proves obstinate—and depend upon it some surely will—the milk will cool while your patience is being tried. It must be heated by adding a little hot water to it, for the young baby must not get cold milk, even when it is obstinate. Remember it is against nature for a young calf to put its head down to drink, so while it is learning this we must be patient. It will help matters at first to raise the pail, or better still, a dish, to the calf, if possible. Never feed in wooden pails. They soon sour. Always wash and scald the pails at least once a day. It takes less time than to bother with sick calves.

As a rule, it is a good plan to feed the calf whole milk for the first three weeks, though there are many strong ones which would stand the change to skim milk at two weeks. At first give from six to eight pounds (two and one-half to three and one-half quarts), according to the size of the calf, twice daily. At the end of three weeks it should get from eight to ten pounds.

In the event of a calf from any cause not getting the colostrum (first milk), which is very laxative and intended by nature to cleanse the bowels of the young animal, it is advisable to feed it with the milk from the freshest, lowest testing cow you have, at the same time watching carefully to see if the bowels are acting. If not give about two tablespoonfuls of warm raw linseed oil or castor oil, repeating the dose if necessary.

Jersey milk is often too rich in fat for the calf to do well on it. Such milk should be diluted with water. Or give the calf milk from another fresh cow of low test if you have one.

"In feeding calves by hand," said an expert stock raiser to me, "I would never be without a thermometer and some means of weighing the milk, as I would far rather let a calf go without a meal than have it get a couple of pounds too much milk or have it get it at a temperature of 70 degrees if it had been used to getting it at 90 degrees, which is about right."

When heating milk for calves it is best to place the vessel containing it in a pan of hot water; then there is no danger of its being burned or boiled. One great advantage of separator skim milk is that if fed immediately it is at the right temperature and is fresh and sweet. Besides, I think the animal heat in the milk has a certain vitality in it. The froth should be removed. It is not good for the calf, sometimes causing colic.

In changing from whole milk to skim milk do not be in too great a hurry. Take at least a week to make the change.

At two or three weeks the calf will begin to eat a little hay and should be provided with some nice, bright clover hay. It should also get a little meal about this time. A good plan is to fill the hand with bran and crushed oats, and when the calf has finished its milk hold your fingers for it to suck, and while it is doing so work the meal, a little at a time, into its mouth with your thumb. Another plan is to put a little meal into the bottom of the pail just as it has finished drinking. Some give it a few whole oats. The chewing and mixing of the food with saliva promote digestion and thrift. A little pulped roots is relished by the calf and tends to keep the appetite keen. If you wish to fatten a calf give it some fat producing food, such as a little cornmeal.

A calf of two months should not get over eight quarts of milk per day; at four months it cannot make good use of more than ten quarts. With this it should get two quarts of mixed crushed grain per day and all the hay it can eat.

At six months the milk allowance may be dropped out, or before that time if milk is scarce. Weaning the calf from milk should be slowly

done by substituting water gradually. Calves should have fresh, clean water to drink from babyhood to maturity.

Do not forget the supply of salt for the calves. Occasionally put a lump of fresh sod in the calf pen. The calves seem to enjoy a taste of earth.

It is always well to substitute something to replace the fat taken from skim milk fed to calves. When making the change from whole milk a tablespoonful of ground oilcake may be added to the milk. If flaxseed is used, and there is nothing better, it should be well boiled and from a half cupful to a cupful of the jelly added to the warm milk. To make the jelly take one pint of whole flaxseed to four quarts of water, add a little salt, soak overnight and boil for an hour next morning. Some put into the milk a little of the oatmeal porridge made for breakfast.

Good calves have been reared on hay tea. Good, bright clover hay is put through a cutting box and cut fine, three pounds per day allowed for a six-week-old calf. It is then well boiled, strained and a quarter of a pound each of ground flaxseed and wheat middlings added for each calf. It is again boiled and fed at a temperature of 90 degrees. This makes a nourishing, easily digested food. The older cattle relish the steeped hay.

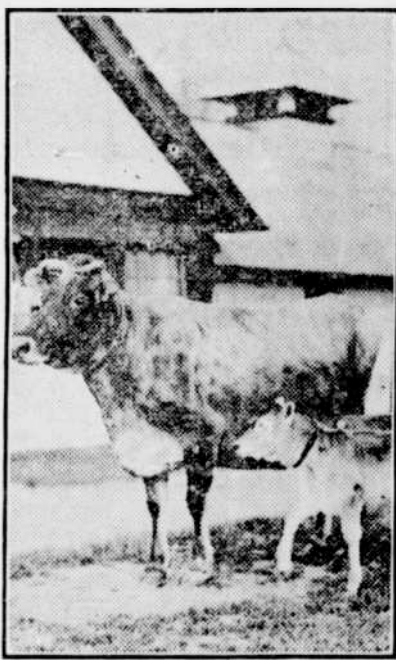
A successful dairyman, who sends his milk all off the farm, uses the following mixture to make a thin gruel, a substitute for milk: One hundred pounds ground oilcake, 100 pounds low grade flour, twenty-five pounds ground flaxseed.

In raising calves it is very unwise to pour the milk into a trough and let them all drink together.

Calves should not be exposed to extremes in weather and are better to be housed most of the time for at least the first six months of their lives.

The calf's skin is tender and may blister and become very sore if exposed to the hot sun. A nice clean grass paddock develops the muscles and keeps them in general good health. When calves sweat badly there is probably bad ventilation in the stable. Give them plenty of fresh air, even though it be cold.

The pen must be frequently cleaned out, be kept dry and have plenty of litter or the calves will not thrive and are sure to get some of the many troubles which attack young stock. It



JERSEY COW AND HER CALF.

is a good plan to sprinkle the floor with land plaster and occasionally spray the pen with a good disinfectant.

Scours— or Diarrhea.

The most frequent trouble in raising a calf on skim milk is scouring. The reason of this in nearly all cases is indigestion, due to one or more of the following preventable causes: Too much milk; sour milk when the calf has been used to sweet; changing from whole to skim milk too suddenly; irregular hours of feeding, dirty feeding pails and dirty wet bedding. The disease frequently begins with constipation, which soon gives way to diarrhea.

Should the calf begin to scour at any time give it just about half its usual ration for a feed or two and two tablespoonfuls of raw linseed oil or castor oil. Some add twenty drops of laudanum. When the scouring has stopped, gradually increase the feed until the calf is getting its regular allowance.

There are several remedies for scours recommended by different authorities. Of these the most popular seem to be raw eggs, flour, limewater, black tea and blood meal. The latter is highly recommended as a calf feed. About a teaspoonful in the milk is said to be a cure for scours and if fed regularly is a preventive.

The first year—when she is a calf—is the most important in a cow's life. Stunt the calf and it can never develop into the profitable cow which good care and thrifty growth would have produced. It is true that the cow is partly born and partly made. Our aim should be to train the calf to make use of coarse foods.

Dehorning.

Where a large number of cows run together it is probably the safest and best plan to have them dehorned, though it certainly detracts from their appearance. The best time to dehorn is in calfhood. Calves may be easily dehorned when a few days old. Clip the hair where the rudimentary horns appear and with a moistened stick of caustic potash rub the little buttons of horn until the skin becomes inflamed and tender to the touch. One application is usually sufficient. As caustic potash burns, be careful not to get it on the hands or on the calf's head.

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