



Complete Dairy Calf Feeding Guide (Birth to 12 Months)

Description

Feeding a calf properly from birth lays the foundation for a productive, healthy dairy cow. The right nutrition at every stage ensures high milk yield, early maturity, and reduced health risks such as delayed or silent heat.

First 3 Days – Colostrum is Life

From the moment a calf is born, she must be fed high-quality colostrum—warm and fresh from the mother.

- **Amount:** 6 litres per day, split into two or three feeds.
- **Tip:** Do not allow her to suckle directly in commercial setups—use a bottle or bucket feeder.
- **Hydration:** Introduce clean water early. It helps her differentiate it from milk and prevents conditions like bloody urine (hematuria).

2 Weeks Old – Start the Rumen Journey

This is when we begin developing the rumen with soft solids.

- **Feeds:** Introduce **starter pellets** (up to 50g/day) and soft forages like sweet potato vines.
- These feeds promote rumen development, key for future digestion of roughage.

1 Month Old – Building the Base

By now, the calf is growing quickly and needs more energy.

- **Milk:** 3-4 litres/day (preferably whole cow's milk).
- **Pellets:** 120g/day.

- **Deworming:** Deworm at this stage to remove internal parasites.
 - **Supplements:** Introduce **Ndamaplus**® (12.5g/day) mixed into soaked pellets for immunity, growth, and stress reduction.
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2 Months Old - Transition Phase

- **Milk:** 2-3 litres/day.
 - **Pellets:** Continue starter pellets.
 - **Supplements:** Maintain mineral lick use.
 - **Deworming:** Repeat deworming.
 - Maintain **Ndamaplus**® supplementation.
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3 Months Old - Weaning Time

Begin preparing the calf to be fully weaned.

- **Milk:** Reduce to 1-2 litres/day.
 - **Pellets:** Shift to **finisher pellets**.
 - **Minerals:** Introduce a **mineral block**.
 - Continue **Ndamaplus**® to reduce weaning stress.
 - **Deworming:** Stay on schedule.
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4 Months Old - Fully Weaned

- Transition fully to dry feeds.
 - **Feeds:** Start on **weaner meal**, high-quality **hay**, and **corn silage**.
 - Continue mineral supplements and proper housing.
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5 to 12 Months - The Growth Stretch

This phase can be tough. Many calves experience slowed growth, weak health, or even death due to poor feeding. Here's how to avoid it:

- **Feeds:** Provide **1kg of dairy meal/day**, **free-choice (ad libitum)** access to hay and silage.
 - Use high-quality fodder like **Bhoma Rhodes** or **corn silage**.
 - **Minerals:** Continue **mineral lick rich in calcium** for bone development.
 - **Deworming:** Every 2 months after 6 months of age.
 - **Management:** Ensure proper housing, fresh water, and attentive observation by farm staff.
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Results You Can Expect

By following this structured feeding plan, your calves will:

- Grow stronger and healthier
- Show **timely onset of heat**
- Achieve **higher milk yields** in adulthood

For advice or struggling calves, reach out to **Dairyverse Consulting**—we're here to help you raise champions.

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