

Farmer Skill and Knowledge Checklist for Calf Care and Calf Rearing

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This checklist is designed to be used by dairy farmers as employers to help individual employees understand and follow through on tasks related to calf care and calf rearing. It is simplified so that an individual with limited abilities can be successful. If you are just starting out, don't be intimidated by this list; just use it to prioritize your learning. If you are experienced, remember that you can always improve and learn more, whatever your skill level. In farming, there's always something new to learn. This bulletin and University of Maine Extension staff can be helpful resources.

Circle your current and desired (target) competence using this scale:

- 1=No knowledge/skill
- 2=Some knowledge/skill
- 3=Well-informed/experienced

Recommended knowledge	My current level			My target level		
Cleanliness and Sanitation						
Remove manure or soiled bedding from around each calf daily.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Provide a good amount of clean bedding for each calf.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Understand the importance of good ventilation and fresh air for calves.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to clean and disinfect feeding equipment properly to prevent biofilms from developing.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Calf Feeding						
Be able to properly tube feed a new born calf.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Provide each calf access to fresh water 24/7.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to properly provide milk to each calf (via machine, bottle, or bucket).	1	2	3	1	2	3
Understand milk volumes and know how much to feed each calf.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to provide fresh ration to each calf.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how and when to wean calves based on solid food intake.	1	2	3	1	2	3

Calf Health						
Be able to tell the difference between a healthy calf and a sick calf.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Check to make sure each calf is bright eyed and alert.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Make sure each calf can stand and is able to move about.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Check for loose stools (diarrhea) that could be a sign of illness.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to take the body temperature of a calf and understand what is normal.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Check calves daily for sores on legs, knees, sides, and neck.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to look for and identify extra teats and communicate with the owner.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Make sure each calf is not being sucked on by other calves (check ears, tails, other body parts).	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know the procedure to anesthetize and dehorn a calf as determined by the owner/veterinarian.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to detect an infected wound.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Document vaccination records.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Check for respiratory problems by watching calves breath and checking for runny noses and eyes.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to properly give injections of vaccines and other treatments (Sub Q and IM.)	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to properly give treatments to calves orally.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Personal Safety						
Wash your hands to prevent diseases such as crypto and ringworm in yourself.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Wear proper footwear and clothing when handling and caring for calves.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know safety rules when working around cattle especially those cows having just calved.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Reporting Work						
Report any sick calf to the manager.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Report anything that doesn't look right to the boss (missing ear tags, a calf that is not hungry, etc.).	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to identify ringworm and notify owner.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to identify pinkeye and notify owner.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to identify external parasites and notify owner.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Keep track of your work time.	1	2	3	1	2	3
General						
Know how to ear tag a calf and/or use other calf identification supplies.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to read an ear tag and write or remember the number.	1	2	3	1	2	3

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