

Welfare of calves

The aim of these rules is to protect the welfare of calves¹ by setting minimum standards for their care and husbandry. These rules apply as well as the rules for the welfare of farmed animals (SMR 18).

A. You must

1. inspect all housed calves at least twice a day, and those kept outside at least once a day;
2. make sure that each of your calves can stand up, turn around, lie down, rest and groom itself without difficulty;
3. make sure that individual stalls or pens satisfy the minimum width and length rules² and that they have perforated walls which allow the calves to see each other and have physical contact with one another (except for those isolating sick animals);
4. make sure that each calf, when kept in a group, has its minimum allowance of unobstructed floor space³;
5. provide flooring, for those calves kept in buildings, that is:
 - smooth but not slippery;
 - designed so there is no injury or suffering to the calves standing or lying on it;
 - suitable for the size and weight of the calves;
 - rigid, even and stable;
6. keep all housed calves on, or at all times give them access to, a lying area that is clean, comfortable, well drained and has dry bedding;
7. give all calves appropriate bedding;
8. for calves kept in an artificially lit building, provide artificial lighting for a period that is at least equal to the period of natural light normally available between 9.00am and 5.00pm;
9. clean and disinfect housing and equipment used for your calves; remove dung, urine and leftover food as often as necessary to reduce smells and avoid attracting flies or rodents;
10. feed all weaned calves at least twice a day;
11. make sure when feeding group-housed calves that each calf either:
 - has access to feed at the same time as the others in the feeding group;
 - has continuous access to feed;
 - is fed by an automatic feeding system;
12. give your calves fresh drinking water at all times in hot weather conditions or when they are ill;

1 'Calf' means any bovine animal up to 6 months old, including those reared outdoors.

2 Details of width and length rules are available from the cross compliance section of our website at rpa.defra.gov.uk/crosscompliance/appendices or Schedule 6 to the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007.

3 Details of minimum floor space allowance rules are available from the cross compliance section of our website at rpa.defra.gov.uk/crosscompliance/appendices or Schedule 6 to the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007.

13. give all calves food that contains enough iron⁴;
14. provide the specified minimum daily ration⁵ of fibrous food for each calf over 2 weeks old;
15. make sure that each calf receives bovine colostrum as soon as possible after it is born and within the first 6 hours of life.

B. You must not

1. tether your calves;
2. muzzle your calves;
3. keep a calf in an individual stall or pen after the age of 8 weeks (unless it needs to be isolated to receive treatment).

You will not break the rule relating to the tethering of calves if tethers are applied to group-housed calves, for up to 1 hour, when you are feeding them milk or milk substitute. In this case any tether must be regularly inspected and adjusted to make sure that it does not cause pain or injury to the calf and allows it to lie down, rest, stand up and groom itself.



Further advice and guidance

The appendix for welfare of calves (SMR 16) is available on our website at rpa.defra.gov.uk/crosscompliance/appendices

For a copy of *Codes of Recommendation for the Welfare of Livestock: Cattle* (PB7949) visit the Defra website at defra.gov.uk

For Council of Europe Recommendations made under the *European Convention on the Protection of Animals Kept for Farming Purposes* visit the Council of Europe website at www.coe.int

Your local Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency office at animalhealth.defra.gov.uk

Defra helpline: 08459 33 55 77

⁴ To maintain a blood haemoglobin level of 4.5 mmol/litre.

⁵ Details of the minimum daily ration are available from the cross compliance section of our website rpa.defra.gov.uk/crosscompliance/appendices or Schedule 6 to the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007.