

New calf house leads to improved calf rearing system

@CalfChat
Time to talk about calf rearing!

Graham Robson farms with his dad John at Roe farm in Preston, Lancashire and supply Arla with milk averaging 12,000lt/cow/year. They farm 270ac with 220 cows milking through 4 Lely robots. Cows average 41lt/day over 3.3 milkings.

Calves are at first reared in hutches receiving 4lt of colostrum as soon as possible. The calves are fed twice daily, gradually introduced from colostrum to Transformula on the 4th feed via bucket.

Calves receive 4lt Transformula a day until day 14 (14% concentration); receiving solely Shine Heiferstart (12.5% concentration) by day 21; building up to 6lt of Shine Heiferstart/day by 3 weeks until ready to wean.

Calves receive fresh water, 17% crude protein calf starter pellet and hay from birth through to bulling age, keeping the system simple.

Calves wean when they consume 1.5kg pellets daily, achieved by feeding milk once a day, decreasing over 7 days then withdrawn totally by day 70.

Previously calves were fed a product in milk replacer designed to limit infectivity of Cryptosporidia, however John had to use Halocur and were regularly rehydrating calves.

Since introducing Transformula transition milk replacer and Shine Heiferstart to follow on 3 years ago, Graham and John Robson have cut Halocur out. Graham championed the products, "calves thrive on this system. We don't lose calves and pneumonia is now unheard of". He continues, "we bought a 50ml bottle 6 months ago and it has barely been touched which is impressive as 280 heifer and beef calves are reared all year round. We know when calves haven't received Transformula".



Calf rearer, **John Valent** and **Selina Field**, Bonanza calf Nutrition

Selina Field of Bonanza Calf Nutrition says, "Transformula is key in supporting the neonatal calf's immature immune system which is under constant pathogenic, viral and bacterial pressure in the first month of life. Transformula contains 200g of low heat skim, sweet whey and buttermilk in every 300g of feed along with specific polyclonal antibodies, pre and probiotics minimising digestive upsets and clinical scour cases; maximising subsequent development in the young calf." She continues, "Shine Heiferstart was invented, specifically to follow on from Transformula with a higher concentration of natural additives, minimizing pathogenic and viral disease in calves from 2.5 to 8 weeks; targeting Cryptosporidia, Coccidiosis, and Pasturella. Shine Heiferstart is also made from low heat co-dried dairy raw materials for maximum consistency and digestion, ensuring maximum intakes of dry feed for increased rumen development and higher weaning weights."

The Robsons' attention to their early calf development clearly follows on into long term performance of the herd. Cows calve down at around 24 months of age. Some heifers calve as early as 1 year 9 months at no detriment to the animal, with 41 litres/cow average and 5 lactations+ per animal reaffirming such high performance. Heifers easily achieve bulling weight at 12 months with the Robsons' taking pride in several 100 ton yielding cows, with one currently in her 9th lactation.

