**Hand rearing Calves**

*About your new calf:*

Jersey bulls are smaller in size than other breeds. They typically weigh between 540 to 820kgs when they reach adulthood and are quite muscular about their crests and shoulders.

*What can they eat?*

Calves should be fed high quality milk replacer at the rate of 2 litres twice daily for the first 4 weeks of life. Under no circumstances should you use skim milk powder. Do not dilute milk as this causes scours. Also, ensure milk always at least has the chill taken off it since cold milk can cause scours. The best milk temperature is between 35°C and 38°C, but it may be fed as cold as 6°C.

Always use a teat system for feeding as calves drink better this way. This is because the action of sucking by the calf normally stimulates the closure of a structure called the oesophageal groove. Closure of this groove delivers milk directly from the oesophagus to the "4th stomach" and bypassing the rumen avoiding putrifying and debilitating rumenitis typical of the “poddy” calf.

Sucking on teats also promotes saliva, an important first step for food digestion, and avoids problems associated with drinking too fast.

Avoid giving excessive green grass in the first 6–8 weeks of age to prevent any digestive problems.

*Creating a home for you calf:*

Calves must be kept in a clean environment with access to a dry and draught free shed area. During wet periods hand reared calves may need to be moved into the dry area until they get used to going there themselves.

From the outset, ensure calves have access to clean fresh water. Check the water daily to ensure it is always fresh and clean. Calves need to learn to drink water even when they get milk to drink. Come weaning, they will then know how to drink water and will not suffer the check in growth that many experience.

Cattle are ruminants and have four stomachs. At birth, the abomasum or fourth stomach is the only stomach that is functioning.

As the calf grows and starts to graze, the other stomachs (rumen, reticulum and omasum) start to develop. Therefore, it is important to provide clean, good quality hay for the calf to eat to help stimulate rumen development. The rumen is usually functioning well by 10–12 weeks.

*Weaning off milk:*

* Calves may be weaned successfully at a young age; however, providing some milk up to 12 weeks often gives the calf the best opportunity to grow.
* Weaning should be based on concentrate consumption of at least 650g of meal a day—not on age. As some calves will reach the target consumption earlier, it is best to feed concentrates separately with more than one calf.
* Weaning should occur over a week long period
* It is important to clean out old feed, i.e. just keep small amounts at any one time in the feed trough.

*Scouring:*

* ‘Calf scours’ (diarrhoea) is the most common symptom of illness in young calves and is usually a problem in the first month of life. The scour can be white, yellow, grey or blood-stained, and is often foul-smelling.
* Whatever the cause of the scour, the lining of the bowel is damaged, resulting in the loss of large amounts of body fluid into the gut. As a result, the calf quickly dehydrates, electrolytes become unbalanced, energy reserves are depleted, and the calf may develop shock and die. The treatment of scours in calves should aim to replace lost body fluids, correct the electrolyte imbalance, and supply energy.
* Scours results in the loss of vital salts, fluid and energy necessary for the calf’s survival. Treatment of scours is directed at replacing these losses. Oral electrolyte solutions provide balanced sources of salts, fluids and energy, and can be fed up to six times a day.
* However, the energy they provide is not adequate, so continue to feed to the calf its normal milk or milk replacer. Ensure that milk feeds and electrolyte feeds are separated by at least 2 hours to allow normal milk clotting and digestion.
* Electrolyte solutions are best fed at body temperature.

**Good Luck with your new baby calf!**