

# Calf Pens

A calf needs to receive colostrum through its mother's milk within six hours of its birth, to ensure it starts life with a full set of antibodies (calves do not obtain immunity through the placenta but must ingest proteins through the stomach wall, which remains porous for the first 24 hours of life).

If a Pierrepont cow is not seen to have fed its newborn calf within six hours of the birth, she is milked and the colostrum given to the calf. Calves spend three to four days with their mothers, who feed them at least twice a day.

After that, the calves are kept in individual pens and fed a balanced powdered milk diet. There are two advantages to this:

- the milk powder ensures that the diet contains all the nutrients required, which is not always possible when the calf drinks its mother's milk, as this may vary in content due to the seasonal quality of grass in the pasture;
- it is more economical to feed the milk powder to calves and not practical to have young calves and adult cows in the same field together (the calves might be trodden on or cross-contaminated by feeding from the wrong cow).

At around ten days of age, the bull calves are bought by Jane and Paul Denley at Woodlands Jersey Beef, who grow them on for the next two years for their meat.

The heifer calves stay in their pens for 10 weeks, being weaned at 6-8 weeks. The calves then live together in the same dairy yard, which is carpeted with straw and roofed, though otherwise open to the elements, before eventually moving outside to the fields.

This sign was first published in 2012.

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