

# For Your Information

Courtesy Of:

## Cotati Large Animal Hospital

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## Purchasing and Starting Drop Calves

### Purchasing:

1. The fewest number of problems will occur if you purchase a calf that has already been weaned
2. It is best to buy a calf from someone you know or from a reputable source. Calves purchased from auctions have hidden problems
3. **Look for a strong, alert and active calf with a shiny hair coat**

### Arrival at Home:

1. You will need a warm, dry and well bedded area which has good ventilation
2. For the first couple of months, that area can be as small as four feet wide by twelve feet long
3. A heat source is usually unnecessary unless the calf becomes ill or outside temperatures drop very low

### Feeding:

#### 1. Free Choice Water

#### 2. Milk

- a. As a rule of thumb, calves drink about 10% of their body weight in milk. That works out to **about 2 quarts of milk daily for a 50lbs calf**
  - i. This is split into of two one quart feedings 12 hours apart (**three smaller feedings daily for the first week is even better**)
  - ii. For best results, start calves for the first week on about 2/3 of the calculated volume. If they are doing well after 1-2 weeks, then their daily milk volume can be slowly increased to 10% of their body weight
- b. Most calves will have a little diarrhea during the first 2 weeks of life. Slightly reducing the milk for 2 days will usually resolve the problem. They generally will not appear depressed or ill.
- c. If a calf appears dull and listless or the diarrhea persists, you should contact your veterinarian as soon as possible

#### 3. Solid Food

- a. Starter grains can be started any time, and calves generally begin eating as early as 1 week of age
- b. Calves may be given free choice hay at about 2 weeks of age

#### 4. Weaning

- a. Calves can be weaned as early as 2 months of age, but they will do much better if fed milk until they are at least 3 months old
- b. In order to wean, they must be eating hay and grain readily
- c. Wean them slowly by decreasing the milk to once a day for 1 week. Then, once every other day for a second week