

## **Tips for Using Holstein Heart-Girth Weight Tape**

These notes assume that you have a Holstein calf weight tape, Coburn #44556.

To see a picture of this go to <https://www.coburn.com/holstein-calf-weigh-tape-44556>. Nasco and Amazon sell them.

Remember our most important job is to measure growth by getting reasonably accurate estimates of weights at two or more points in time.

1. For newborn calves it is always more important to get the calf dried off and fed plenty of good quality clean colostrum as soon as possible after birth than to divert our attention to getting weight estimates.
2. Take reasonably good care of your tape – especially keep it dry. Wetness can result in inaccurate estimates due to the fabric stretching.
3. When practical, have the same person do the weight estimates both after birth and whenever you choose to do subsequent estimates (for example, near or at weaning). If there is a tendency to either over or under estimate weight, at least with one person making both measurements the bias is likely to be in the same direction.
4. Make heart girth estimates with calves in a standing position. There are too many ways to make mistakes trying to estimate heart girth for a calf that is lying down – just do not do it that way.
5. If you are not sure where the “heart girth” location is on a calf, get help from your vet or other knowledgeable person on the dairy. It works best to have them physical show you rather than just describe this in words.
6. Pull tightly to the same degree each time as you circle the heart girth of the calf. Think of pulling just hard enough to compress the hair coat but not stretch the tape.
7. Write down the value next to the calf number – The closest ¼ inch is a practical method of recording. Weight estimates can be recorded when away from the hustle-bustle of handling calves.