

How much to feed a 100# Calf

Many of our two-week-old calves have reached this size. The question is, “How much milk replacer does a 100 pound calf need for maintenance and to grow?”

The answer is, “It depends.” If our housing is the same temperature as outdoors, then it depends on how cold is the weather – 50’s, 30’s or very cold in the teens? And, it depends on our goals – how healthy do we want our calves to be and how rapidly do we expect them to grow?

First, calves use food for maintaining their bodies. Maintenance needs go up a lot when the temperature goes down below freezing. For example, let’s compare the maintenance needs for a 100-pound calf at 50° to those at 30°. At 50 degrees, it takes 3 quarts daily of a 20-20-milk replacer mixed according to bag instructions (8 ounces to make 2 quarts of mix) to keep her alive. In contrast, at 30 degrees, the amount needed is slightly more than 4 quarts daily. These amounts are just for maintenance – no gain figured in at all.

If the weather gets really cold in January (teens during the day and single numbers at night) the amount to keep her alive is nearly 5 quarts daily.

Calves need to grow in order to be healthy. As they grow, their immunity level goes up. If they don’t grow, their resistance to disease does not increase as it should as they get older. They are more likely to get sick.

Growing requires energy and protein. For one pound of gain daily in addition to maintenance, we have to feed about 2 more quarts of milk replacer a day. For our 100 pound calf that needs 3 quarts daily for maintenance at 50°, adding the extra milk replacer for one pound of growth (2 quarts) brings her needs up to 5 quarts a day.

Average size Holstein heifer calves at two weeks of age in cold weather (around 30°) need at least 6 quarts of milk replacer daily. That will meet her needs to stay alive and to grow about 1 pound a day.

Sam Leadley, Calf & Heifer Management Specialist

sleadley@frontiernet.net www.atticacows.com

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See also:

www.atticacows.com in Calf Facts click on Estimated Gain Preweaned Calves, choose your milk replacer from the list to see estimated results from different feeding levels.

www.calfnotes.com Note #100 An Introduction to the Nutrients, Note #121 Added Calf Milk Replacer feeding in cold weather.

Also see for a computer spreadsheet to estimate amounts to feed at different temperatures:

(<http://www.calfnotes.com/downloads/AddedCMR.xls>)

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