

Welfare of bobby calves on farm (adopted 01/08/08)

Definition

A *bobby calf* is a bovine less than 2 weeks old that is not accompanied by its mother. In the dairy industry, bobby calves are the unwanted offspring of dairy cows and generally destined for slaughter rather than herd replacement or rearing for veal.

1 Induced calving

- 1.1 RSPCA Australia is opposed to the use of induced calving as a husbandry practice to regularise milk production in a dairy herd as it causes observable adverse welfare problems for both cow and calf.
- 1.2 Induced calves born one month or more prematurely must be immediately humanely euthanased using a rifle or captive bolt on farm. Euthanasia must be carried out by a person competent in the methods described.

2 Feeding

- 2.1 Colostrum must be fed to calves within 6 hours of birth and at least three times in the first 24 hours of life at a rate of at least 4 litres a day. Milk or milk replacer must be fed twice daily at the rate of 2-4 litres (or 10% of body weight) a day thereafter.
- 2.2 Sufficient feeding stations should be available and be positioned in such a way that all calves are able to feed at the same time.
- 2.3 Adequate wholesome water must be available at all times.
- 2.4 Feeding and watering facilities must be kept clean at all times.

3 Housing facilities

- 3.1 Calves must be kept in a sheltered dry environment and be protected from heat, cold, wind and rain. Floors should be easy to clean and disinfect.
- 3.2 Deep litter should be provided for all calves.
- 3.3 Stocking density should be such that all calves are able to lie down at the same time.

4 Care for sick and injured calves

- 4.1 Sick or injured calves must be segregated and given veterinary treatment or humanely euthanased immediately.
- 4.2 Sick, injured or weak calves must not be assigned for transport.

5 Records

Calves must be identified in such a way to enable their exact age to be easily determined (e.g. by date of birth).

See also – **Policy F4 Transportation of bobby calves**
Position Paper B1 Welfare of bobby calves at pick-up points and sales
Position paper B3 Commercial harvesting of foetal bovine serum
Position paper F5 Transportation of bobby calves
Position paper G2 Welfare of bobby calves at abattoirs