Transport of young calves

Calves – especially around weaning – are very vulnerable to diseases (such as respiratory and gastro-intestinal diseases). Transport can easily stress them. In addition, young calves are hard to handle as a group - herding instinct is not yet developed. Good handling practices prevent undesirable consequences and will benefit other aspect of the animal production (e.g. better body weight gain or less diseases).

General advice

- Calves with unhealed navel: all transport prohibited
- Calves under 10 days: transport allowed for max. 100 km, under specific circumstances
- Calves under 14 days: long journeys prohibited
- Even better! Transport weaned calves after 8 weeks
- If a calf stays lying at stops, contact a veterinarian

Preparation for calves

- Provide appropriate bedding (e.g. straw) which guarantees comfort appropriate to the number of animals, the journey time, the weather and the absorption of urine and faeces
- Use side protection on the deck, in order to avoid the calves’ legs getting trapped between the deck and side walls
- When calves are handled in a group, limit the group size to 10 – 15 calves
- If a ramp is used, the slope should be reduced as much as possible (max. angle of 20°, 36%)
- Load calves with individual help to guide them on the ramp
- In case of long journeys; call the farm or the control post to arrange immediate watering and feeding at arrival, and proper climate conditions for calves (e.g. pre-warming of building)
- It is not allowed to muzzle calves!
The provision of liquid feed to calves in transit is considered to be impractical with current truck design. If unweaned calves are to be fed and watered (milk supplied) during a journey then this may necessitate unloading of the animals (e.g. at a control post) and the provision of milk or other suitable liquid feed by means of a system with rubber teats. Calves should be fed individually and then be rested for an appropriate duration before travelling again.

**Feeding and watering**

**Unweaned calves**

The provision of liquid feed to calves in transit is considered to be impractical with most truck design. Therefore calves might need to be unloaded to be given liquid feed during the stops.

**Weaned calves**

Provide feeder calves a grain-based concentrate feed at rest stops. However, only if calves are accustomed to eating the diet. Sudden changes can cause them to become sick.

**Good liquid feeding: 2 L / 12 hours**

- Feed calves individually and give resting period of at least 1 hour, before re-starting the journey
- Make sure that the drinking system is clean, well-maintained and functioning
- Make sure calves are familiar with the drinking system to supply milk, milk replacer or electrolyte solutions of the right temperature (e.g. use rubber teats)
- If calves don’t know how to use the drinker, maintain a little drip at the drinker to initiate drinking behaviour or use your finger to guide them.
- Monitor the calves closely to ensure the adequate intake. If a calf fails to drink from the drinking system, offer milk/water manually.

**Temperature**

Optimum temperature: 5°C to 25°C. Maintain a stable temperature, as calves are sensitive to temperature changes.

- Provide more floor space
- Additional fans for ventilation
- When necessary, sprinkle water
- During delays, water the calves manually
- Do not transport when over 30 °C
- Pre-warm vehicles prior to loading
- Provide additional bedding
- When necessary, apply additional heating