

Welfare Potential by Production System for Dairy Calves

Level	Example System	Space allowance	Colostrum provision	Enrichment (shelter and bedding)	Surgical procedures
1 = Bad	Calf killed at birth	NA	NA	NA	NA
2	Individual housing (with visual and tactile contact) ¹ . (UK legislation requires higher space allowances than the EU for heavier calves: 2m ² for calves 150-200kg, 3m ² for calves >200kg ¹)	Low - individual hutch/ pen	Insufficient/ unregulated	Straw bedding (required by law for calves up to 2 weeks old ²)	Any of the following: castration, disbudding/dehorning, tail docking (practiced in NZL, AU, IRL, CA, USA)
	Group housing after 8 weeks	Low - individual hutch/ pen, then group pen	Insufficient/ unregulated	Straw bedding	Any of the following: castration, disbudding/dehorning, tail docking (practiced in NZL, AU, IRL, CA, USA)
3 = Better	Group housing after separation from dam	High - group pen (RSPCA: 2m ² bedded area per calf <100kg ³)	As soon as possible (RSPCA: provide colostrum within 6 hours from the dam or another newly-calved cow ⁴)	Permanent deep straw bedding, well-ventilated barns	No routine mutilations, anaesthetic and analgesic provided when practiced
4 = Best	Dam suckling systems (Beter Leven calves suckle mother for 3 months for 1 star, five months for 2 stars or six months for 3 stars) ⁵	High - group calf pen with restricted or free access to dam	As soon as possible (Soil Association: provide colostrum within 6 hours from their mother, no weaning before 12 weeks of age ⁶)	Access to pasture in the grazing season, shade & shelter provided	No mutilations, polled breeds used

¹ [Welfare of Farmed Animals \(England\) Regulations 2000](#)

² Council Directive [2008/119/EC](#) of 18 December 2008 laying down minimum standards for the protection of calves

³ RSPCA Freedom Food Standard <https://science.rspca.org.uk/sciencegroup/faranimals/standards/beefcattle>

⁴ RSPCA Freedom Food Standard <https://science.rspca.org.uk/sciencegroup/faranimals/standards/dairycattle>

⁵ Beter Leven standards <http://beterleven.dierenbescherming.nl/>

⁶ Soil Association standards <http://www.soilassociation.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=I-LqUg6illo%3d&tabid=353>