

# Section 4

## Ideal Calf Housing

You may want to go over this section with members then go on a farm tour and compare different styles. By viewing other housing structures your members will be able to more clearly understand different systems. With this knowledge members will be able to make more appropriate decisions on proper housing for their calves environment.

The ideal calf house should have a number of the following characteristics.

▶ **Easy to Clean**

Keeping calf housing clean is one of the biggest priorities. Dirty calves are sick calves. Many diseases are spread through manure. Houses need to be cleaned out, disinfected and rebedded as older calves move out and younger calves move in.

▶ **Low Cost**

Try to find the best housing for the most economical cost.

▶ **Flexible**

Calf housing should adapt to changes on your farm. For example, at certain times of the year, there may be more calves than at other times. It also needs to adapt to winter and summer weather.



▶ **Well Ventilated**

Good ventilation means the air is fresh, and the housing is not damp or drafty.

▶ **Individual**

Calves being fed a liquid diet from birth to two months old should not be allowed to come into contact with each other. Calf to calf contact spreads disease quickly. Each calf needs about 1.2 m x 2.4 m (3.9 x 7.8 ft.) of her own space to thrive.

▶ **Dry**

Calves need a dry place to live. Wet calves are sick calves.

▶ **Convenient to Work in**

Calf housing should be designed so the dairy farmer can feed and clean the calves easily. Calves need a lot of care, so they should be near their food.

▶ **Warm Calf Environment**

A heated building with a mechanical ventilation system is a warm calf environment. The temperature in a warm calf house should be 10 °C (50° F) with less than 80 per cent humidity, The biggest drawbacks to warm calf housing are:

- Heating bills
- Difficult to keep calves dry
- Difficult to keep place well ventilated

But warm environments are more comfortable for the farmer to work in.

## Let's Compare Calf Housing

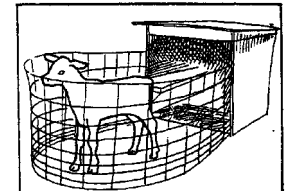
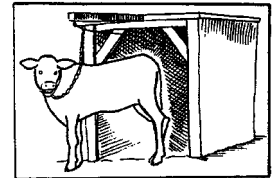
Let's compare three housing options for calves using the factors discussed earlier.

Factors	Hutch	Cold Calf Barn	Warm Calf Barn
Easy To Clean	Yes	If designed properly	If designed properly
Low Cost	Cheap to build and maintain  Spend more on winter feeding	More expensive than hutches, but economical  Spend more on winter feeding	Most expensive due to heating and building cost  Feeding cost the same all year
Flexible	Can be moved anywhere on farm and stored when not in use	If designed properly	If designed properly

## Different Types of Calf Housing

### Calf Hutches (Individual or Superhutch)

Hutches are considered a cold calf environment. Hutches are made of plywood, plastic or fiberglass. The size is usually 1.2 m x 2.4 m (3.9 x 7.8 ft). Underneath a calf hutch, you must place a layer of sand, gravel or crushed stone. Then, add one or two bales of straw to make a comfy bed. Calf hutches are really three houses in one! Inside the calf hutch, it is dry and protected from the weather. Outside the calf hutch, the calf gets exercise and lots of sunlight. And, if the calf is halfway in and halfway out, the calf gets sunlight, but is still safe from the wind.

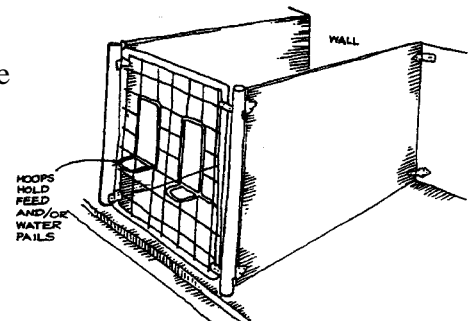


When deciding on placement of hutches, consider where the hutch will catch the most sunlight, and avoid areas that get very hot in the summer or windy in the winter.

### Calf Pens

Calves can also be inside a barn. The barn should be well-ventilated so that the air is dry and fresh. It must also be separate from adult cows.

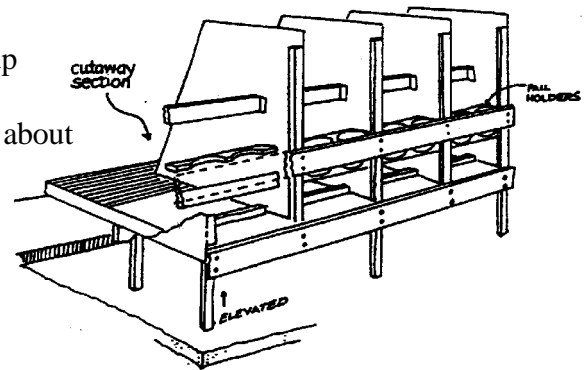
Each calf pen should be 1.2 m x 2.4 m (3.9 x 7.8 ft). Calf pens can be made of plywood. They should have three solid sides and an open front. The open front gets fresh air to the calf and makes her easier to feed. These pens can be taken apart when they are not needed and stored. This also makes them easy to clean!



## Calf Stalls

In heated barns calf stalls are popular, because calf stalls take up less floor space so you get more calves heated for the same amount of money. Calf stalls should be made with solid sides about 1.3 m (4.2 ft) high.

Stalls need to be 0.9 m (2.9 ft) wide and 1.80 m (5.9 ft) long. The calves can be loose or tied in the stall.



### DID YOU KNOW?

Ventilation is keeping the air fresh and fresh air is important for people and for dairy animals. Good ventilation lets old air leave and lets fresh air enter the calf housing.

Good ventilation means:

- ▶ Less dust, heat and odors
- ▶ Healthier animals
- ▶ Cleaner environment for animals and people
- ▶ Longer lasting buildings

Ventilation has two purposes:

- ▶ To get rid of moisture in the winter
- ▶ To get rid of heat in the summer

Moisture in the air, called humidity, makes calves damp and sick. It is also damaging to equipment. Heat makes calves uncomfortable and uncomfortable calves can get sick and grow slowly.