



Why Bottle Calves?

We decided to buy bottle calves because our goal was to start our own beef cattle herd and bottle calves are an inexpensive option. We have a quality supplier in our area that provides top-notch support for their customers. Being new farmers, we needed all the support we could get!

Please be sure to research where your bottle calves are coming from and why they are no longer with their mommas.

Bottle calves are also VERY cute and quickly grow to become a friendly herd of cattle! They will make many memories for you and your family, and are a great opportunity for kids to learn about caring for animals! Let's begin!

Bottle Calf 101

You bought some bottle calves. They're baby cows, how hard can this be? I'd like to provide you with some information from our awesome calf supplier, Diamond P Cattle Company in Social Circle, Georgia and our own hard-learned lessons! Enjoy!

Housing

Let's start with housing. The first few months of their little lives should be spent protected from the elements, especially cold winter winds and the heat of summer. There should be ample bedding such as hay or wood chips. We used an old horse stall and visited a local lumber yard to see about some wood shavings. Love the locals! Larger cattle companies use plastic shelters and small pens. The shelters should be cleaned daily to prevent disease. If the weather is nice, let those little guys

Supply List!

- ✓ Sheltered area
- ✓ Shavings/hay for bedding
- ✓ Water trough/bucket
- ✓ Nursing bottles
- ✓ Milk replacer
- ✓ Calf starter
- ✓ Hay for feed
- ✓ Stock builder grain
- ✓ Minerals/salt lick
- ✓ Bottle holders

out to romp around a bit! We sectioned off a corner of our pasture so they could visit with the rest of the herd through the fences. Cattle should have some protection from wind and access to shade all year round, not just when they are babies!

Savings Tip!
Visit your local lumber yard to see if they sell wood shavings!

Feeding

Milk replacer is the primary feed for bottle calves until about 8-weeks old, delivered via nursing bottles. Almost all milk replacers have the mixing ratios on the bag and should be mixed with clean, almost hot water. Remember, the milk is supposed to be like that coming out of momma, so it shouldn't be cold! The powder and water can be mixed directly into the bottles or prepared in a bucket, then poured into the bottles. This mainly depends on your prep area and what works best for you. Trust me, you'll work out the best method right around the time they're ready to wean.

Calf starter and hay should also be provided for the calves to eat freely. Calf starter is a grain mixture and made to work with milk replacers to supply additional vitamins and minerals to grow strong and healthy calves. Minerals, salt licks, and stock building grain should be provided for calves older than two months. A water trough is a must as well. Clean, fresh water should always be available! If the calves are to be grass-fed only, the grain can be substituted with protein feeds like sea kelp.

Here is the feeding schedule provided by our friends at Diamond P Cattle:

0-7 days old > momma

1-3 weeks old > 2 pints twice a day

3-4 weeks old > 3 pints twice a day

4-7 weeks old > 4 pints twice a day

7-8 weeks old > begin weaning*

Week 8, Day 1 and 2 > 4 pints once a day in the evening

Week 8, Day 3 and 4 > 3 pints once a day

Week 8, Day 5 and 6 > 2 pints once a day

Week 8, Day 7 > 1 pint once a day

Week 8, Day 8 > No more bottles!

*Note: If your calves seem a bit small (under 80-lbs) or you're an overprotective parent like me, you can delay the weaning for 2-3 more weeks. We extended the weaning by adding 2-3 days to each decrease.

At two months old, the calf starter should slowly transition to stock builder and minerals or a salt lick should be provided.

Scours

Scours is simply calf diarrhea; however, it is the *primary cause of death in calves* and has several types (E. coli is an example). Scours can impede the ingestion of nutrients and damage the intestinal tract. I don't have the expertise to get into details on this and I have provided some great resources at the end of this guide for future exploration, should you so desire.

The symptoms of calf scours would be described as a stream of yellowish diarrhea and lethargy. If you suspect your calf may have scours, discontinue the milk replacer immediately and following the guidelines below. **Contacting a veterinary is always the best option when a calf shows signs of scours or sickness, as scours can be deadly!**

SCOURS TREATMENT:

Day 1: Feeding 1 and 2

(no milk replacer, only calf starter and hay)

- 5mls kaolin pectin before Feeding 1
- 2 scours pills before Feeding 1
- 2-pints electrolytes/Gatorade (in the afternoon)
- 3mls SpectaGuard before Feeding 2
- 1 scour pill before Feeding 2

Day 2: Feeding 3 and 4

- 5mls kaolin pectin before Feeding 3
- 1 scour pill before Feeding 3
- 1-pint milk replacer (in the morning)
- 1-pint electrolytes/Gatorade (in the afternoon)
- 3mls SpectaGuard before Feeding 4
- 1 scour pill before Feeding 4

Day 3: Feeding 5 and 6

- 5mls kaolin pectin before Feeding 5
- 1 scour pill before Feeding 5
- 2-pints milk replacer
- 1 scour pill before Feeding 6
- 5mls kaolin pectin before Feeding 6

Scours Treatment Supply List!

- ✓ Calf Electrolyte powder OR Powdered Gatorade (not red or orange)
- ✓ SpectaGuard
- ✓ Kaolin Pectin
- ✓ Scour pills (bolus)
- ✓ Syringe or drench gun
- ✓ Bolus pill shooter

IMPORTANT!

Scours are VERY contagious to humans and other animals!

Day 4: Feeding 7

5mls SpectaGuard before Feeding 7

2 scours pills before Feeding 7

2-pints milk replacer

Resume normal feeding schedule. If the calves are not showing signs of improvement after the first or second day, contact a veterinarian!

Tips and Useful Information

- ✓ Cattle are herd animals and don't like being alone. Plan on purchasing at least two calves at a time, although evaluate your manpower before taking on more than three yourself!
- ✓ Make sure you have a barrier between you and the calves when feeding, especially if you are alone and trying to feed one at a time! We bought bottle holders for the majority, and hand fed one or two for our daily dose of cuteness!
- ✓ They ram the bottle (or your knees) when the bottle is almost empty! Beware!
- ✓ Calves should be bright-eyed and playful! Pay careful attention to anyone that is not exhibiting energetic behavior.

Resources:

Diamond P Cattle Company, Social Circle, Georgia

<https://www.facebook.com/DiamondPCattleCo/>

Calving Tips: Going to War on Calf Scours

http://www.beefmagazine.com/mag/beef_vets_opiniongoing_war

Calf Scours: Causes, Prevention and Treatment

<https://www.drovers.com/article/calf-scours-causes-prevention-and-treatment-0>

Storey's Guide to Raising Beef Cattle

<https://www.amazon.com/Storeys-Guide-Raising-Beef-Cattle/dp/1603424547>

THANK YOU!

www.crazycowlady.com

The information in this guide is based on personal experience and research, it is not to be substituted for professional veterinary advice. A veterinarian should be contacted if an animal is showing signs of illness.