



## Preparing for Calving

- Now is the time to prepare the calving and calf-rearing areas well in advance of the start of calving.
- Cleaning out such houses now allows them time to dry out and this helps to break any carry over of infection from one year to the next
- Ensure you are using a suitable disinfectant when washing out houses especially if you had issues with Crypto/Coccidiosis
- Talk to your vet about a tailored vaccination programme for your farm in advance of the spring 2024 calving season
  - Colostrum quality can be increased by vaccinating cows with scour vaccines before calving to encourage antibody production against rotavirus, corona virus and e-coli
  - Pneumonia vaccinations are administered to newborn calves from one week of age and provide protection against pneumonia caused by the RSV and PI3 viruses for a minimum of 12 week
- Check that you have adequate straw supplies on hand. One standard 4x4 round bale of barley straw is adequate to rear one calf to 8-10 weeks of age (150kg of straw or 12 small square bales)
- Ensure that calf houses are fit for purpose, being well ventilated and well drained, while ensuring the calves are not exposed to draughts
- Ensure that calves have enough space within a pen, the minimum requirement is 1.5 m<sup>2</sup>/calf for calves
- Calves spend 80% of their time lying down so the type and depth of bedding used is important
- Have you enough space and accommodation for peak calf numbers? Calving pattern and age at sale may affect peak calf numbers which can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1: Effect of calving rate and age at sale on peak calf numbers for a 100-cow herd.**

Six-week calving rate	Age at sale of beef calves	Peak calves	Space required (m <sup>2</sup> )
70%	Two weeks	47	80
70%	Four to five weeks	58	100
85%	Two weeks	50	85
85%	Four to five weeks	69	118

## Calving Checklist

- ✓ Calving jack
- ✓ Pair of foot ropes
- ✓ Iodine navel disinfectant
- ✓ Stomach Tube
- ✓ Hydrated Lime
- ✓ Calf feeder teats-ensure they are not perished and order spares
- ✓ Disposable long-sleeve gloves and lubricant in a squeeze bottle for handling cows
- ✓ Bottle with nipple for feeding new-born calf
- ✓ Electrolytes
- ✓ Colostrum Refractometer to measure colostrum quality
- ✓ Freezer bags for storing colostrum
- ✓ Calf jackets
- ✓ Disinfectant
- ✓ Foot bath for outside calf house
- ✓ Calcium (Ca) and Magnesium (Mg) for any milk fever or grass tetany cases
- ✓ Tape, leg bands, or spray paint for marking cows