

# Welfare Potential by Production System for Dairy Calves

Level	Example System	Space allowance	Colostrum provision	Enrichment (shelter and bedding)	Surgical procedures
<b>1 = Bad</b>	Calf killed at birth	NA	NA	NA	NA
<b>2</b>	Individual housing (with visual and tactile contact) <sup>1</sup> . (UK legislation requires higher space allowances than the EU for heavier calves: 2m <sup>2</sup> for calves 150-200kg, 3m <sup>2</sup> for calves >200kg <sup>1</sup> )	Low - individual hutch/ pen	Insufficient/ unregulated	Straw bedding (required by law for calves up to 2 weeks old <sup>2</sup> )	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)
<b>3 = Better</b>	Group housing after separation from dam	High - group pen (RSPCA: 2m <sup>2</sup> bedded area per calf <100kg <sup>3</sup> )	As soon as possible (RSPCA: provide colostrum within 6 hours from the dam or another newly-calved cow <sup>4</sup> )	Permanent deep straw bedding, well-ventilated barns	No routine mutilations, anaesthetic and analgesic provided when practiced
<b>4 = Best</b>	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) <sup>5</sup>	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 <sup>6</sup> )	Access to pasture in the grazing season, shade & shelter provided	No mutilations, polled breeds used

<sup>1</sup> [Welfare of Farmed Animals \(England\) Regulations 2000](#)

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

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

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

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

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