

Calf jackets

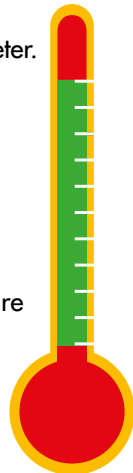
Calf jackets, coats or blankets can be used to help keep calves warm, dry and healthy when temperatures fall below 15°C. Before investing in these products, ensure your calves are receiving sufficient energy and have dry bedding to keep warm.

Considerations when buying calf jackets

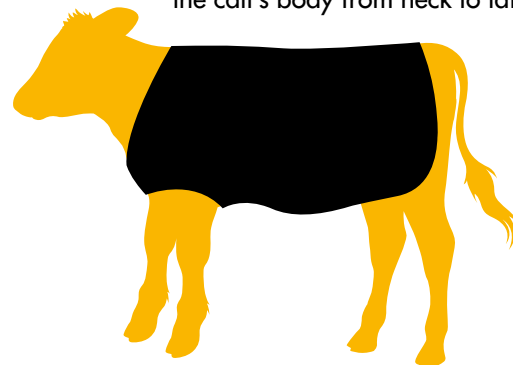
- **Breathable material** that allows moisture on the calf's coat to pass through
- **Water resistant or waterproof**
- **Machine washable.** Jackets must be washed after each use to reduce the risk of spreading diseases between calves
- **Straps and fasteners.** Different types of adjustable straps and fasteners are available. Velcro will clog and requires additional cleaning and maintenance. Simple, clunky plastic clips are preferable. Check with the supplier that replacements are available.

Management tips

1. Monitor and record daily temperature in the calf shed using a min-max thermometer.
2. Agree a protocol with the farm team to include temperature at which calves will start to experience cold stress.
3. Calves less than 3 weeks are most vulnerable to extreme temperatures therefore prioritise these if the temperature is below 15°C.
4. Calves older than 3 weeks may not need a jacket unless the temperature is below 5°C.
5. Only put jackets on dry calves. Wet calves must first be dried thoroughly until they have a dry, fluffy coat.



6. Use only dry and clean jackets. Dry jackets provide better insulation and avoid trapping moisture beneath them. Using clean jackets reduces the spread of disease.
7. Be sure the jacket fits snugly to the calf so it covers the calf's body from neck to tail.



8. Adjust straps weekly as the calf grows.

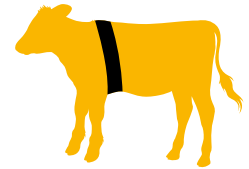
Management tips

9. To preserve body heat ensure calves have enough dry bedding to nest.
10. Monitor jackets for cleanliness and replace soiled or wet jackets with a clean, dry one.
11. Removal of jackets will entirely depend on weather as well as the condition and appetite of each calf. Remove jackets in the morning.
12. Remove dirt from jackets with a hose or light power-wash, if necessary pre-soak.
13. Jackets must be washed at **40-50°C** with detergent and then dried thoroughly between each use.



Monitoring calves

- Monitor growth using a weigh scale, weigh band or height stick
- Check calves at least twice a day
 - Record and monitor early signs of illness: discharge from eyes or nose, cough, dirty hindquarters and scour.



AHDB Dairy has a factsheet titled 'Monitoring growth' which contains guides on target growth rates.

For more information on calf management, please visit the web: dairy.ahdb.org.uk/calves

Bedding tips

- When nesting, the calf's legs should not be visible
- Dry bedding will keep jackets relatively clean and dry
- While sand, sawdust or shavings are suitable bedding choices for summer months, these options are poorer choices for winter since they provide no thermal protection to the calf
- Straw is the ideal bedding for winter.



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