



Latest on feeding milk to calves once a day

On July 22nd 2013 DEFRA issued a statement on the legal position on the practise of feeding calves milk replacers 'once a day'.

Volac welcomes the clarification provided by DEFRA which should result in more consistent advice being given on farm regarding the management practises required to deliver improved health and welfare of calves in their first four weeks.

All Volac calf rearing and management advice is currently being amended to reflect the position that once a day feeding should only be employed as a management tool for calves over 28 days of age.

For calves over 28 days of age, the practice of once a day feeding will encourage increased consumption of solid feed and more rapid rumen development. Volac has always considered that moving to once a day feeding, or step weaning, in the period immediately prior to weaning is an important tool which can lead to an improved transition from liquid to solid feed, minimising stress and setbacks at weaning. In order to simplify and automate this task, Volac has been promoting and employing computerised feeders over the last (10) years.

Once a day feeding of calves should be restricted to those calves over 28 days of age which are consuming sufficient quantities of solid feed to meet their nutrient requirements for growth.

(DEFRA statement follows)



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Dear Sir or Madam

LEGAL POSITION ON 'ONCE A DAY' FEEDING OF CALVES

I am writing to you following your interest in the letter published in the Veterinary Record in April 2013 on the legal position of 'once a day' feeding of artificial milk to calves (<http://veterinaryrecord.bmj.com/content/172/14/371.2.full.pdf+html>).

Following publication of this letter, Defra wrote to the Commission to request its interpretation of point 12 of Annex I to the Calves Welfare Directive 2008/119/EC which states that "All calves must be fed at least twice a day". We specifically asked whether 'once a day' feeding of calves with milk or milk replacer, when also given *ad libitum* access to dry food, roughage and water, met these requirements. The Commission has since replied and I thought it might be useful to circulate its summary response:

"The obligation of feeding calves twice a day remains in all circumstances. For all veal calves and any calf under the age of 28 days, twice feeding with milk replacers is the only way to comply with point 12 of the Annex to the Directive because my understanding of the scientific opinion is that solid feed cannot constitute a sufficient energy supply for the animals. For calves beyond 28 days, it is necessary for the authorities to evaluate to what extent the quantity and the quality of solid feed provided can constitute a real second feeding in the context of the welfare of calves."

Given the Commission's interpretation of the Directive's provision, Defra would like to reiterate its position set out in April's Veterinary Record letter:

"In summary our position is that once a day feeding of calves is illegal. It is not illegal to feed calves once a day with liquid food if they are provided with a second non-liquid feed appropriate to their age. In practice, calves do not eat a sufficient amount of solid food in the first four weeks of life to constitute a feed. Therefore, where this is the case, calves should be fed twice a day with liquid food to satisfy their nutritional needs. The requirement for twice daily feeding remains until 6 months of age."



Where calves are over 28 days of age, those responsible for their care must decide whether the provision of solid food sufficiently constitutes a calf's feed to ensure that feeding milk or milk replacer once a day meets the requirements of point 12 of Annex I to Calves Welfare Directive 2008/119/EC. This decision must be made on a case- by-case basis and should be based on veterinary advice.

I hope that this clarifies the legal position on calf feeding.

Yours sincerely

SERENA COOKE

ANIMAL WELFARE POLICY TEAM