



# Dairy Details

Map 2019

Editor: Lindsey Borst DVM

NORTHERN VALLEY DAIRY PRODUCTION MEDICINE CENTER

## Don't Let Your Calves Fall into the "Transition Slump" Part 2

Last month, we discussed things you can do for your calves before weaning to avoid a "transition slump". This month, we'll list some management practices that can be done during and after the weaning process that will help calves sail smoothly into their post-weaning life.

### *Do I have a "Transition Slump" problem in my calves?*

If you observe any of the following in your calves, they may be experiencing a "Transition Slump". "Transition Slumps" cause calves to go backwards in health and average daily gain, which will lead to lost dollars.

- Loose manure with or without a lot of undigested corn passing through. Poor manure consistency can mean multiple things including the presence of coccidia or other pathogens or acidosis. Most likely these calves either are not eating enough starter to maintain energy needs or their rumen isn't developed enough to properly digest all the starter they are eating.
- Rough, dull hair coats
- Thin body condition
- Increased pneumonia incidence
- Stall out or loss of gain during the weeks following weaning

### *Transition to "Roommate" Life*

If your calves are housed in individual hutches or pens, this will be the first time in their life that they will have "roommates" and this can be a stressful thing. Kind of like going off to college for the first time, putting calves in a dormitory with one or two other roommates, rather than a Frat House of 30+ roommates will make this new lifestyle transition much less stressful. Consider purchasing super hutches and putting just 2-3 calves per super hutch. Leave these calves together for 1-2 weeks. If you house your calves in individual pens, you can simply pull panels in between pens to make one big pen for 2-3 calves. Gradually make groups larger, combining groups of similar aged calves.



CHECK US OUT ON [FACEBOOK](#) AND [DAIRYMED.COM!](#)

Northern Valley Dairy Production Medicine Center

### *If they can't find it, they can't eat it...*

Along with the stress of living in a new place, with new roommates, we've also moved where a calf's food lives in this stage of their life. If calves are moved to a pen with head slats or locks, consider putting some type of feeder on the inside of the pen for a week or two, so that feed is easier for them to find. Automatic waterers are also often a new concept for these calves. It isn't a bad idea to at least push calves up to waterers for the first day or day or make sure they know where water is. Water intakes will increase starter intakes. These young calves' waterers should be some of the cleanest on the farm to help encourage as much water intake as possible.

### **Transition to "Big Kid" Feed**

Up until around 3-4 months of age, you want almost 100% of a calf's diet to be grain. Allowing them to eat too much hay, will dilute out the calories and proteins they need, which can lead to less ADG and calves with "hay bellies". But small amounts should be offered within a month after weaning so that they can learn what it is. TMR should be introduced slowly around 5-6 months old. Since these calves have never been fed fermented feeds before, it will take a little time for their digestive system to figure out how to utilize these feed types. Start by putting some TMR down then putting hay and grain over the top of it.

Taking extra management steps to make a smooth transition for calves at weaning and post-weaning will have many long-term effects. These calves will have better gains, less disease, and better development of their rumen. This will lead to bigger calves that are ready to be bred earlier in life and may get pregnant easier. Research has also shown that less disease and higher gains in calves leads to higher milk production later in life.



**CHECK US OUT ON [FACEBOOK](#) AND [DAIRYMED.COM](#)!**

Northern Valley Dairy Production Medicine Center