

## Section 2

# Transporting the Calf From the farm of Origin



### Introduction

Calves are commonly transferred from the farm of origin to the beef rearing farm within the first three weeks of life. The aim is to limit the impact of the transfer process on the young calf. Paying attention to the transportation environment such as temperature, stocking density, distance and the type of road travelled can help to reduce the level of stress incurred.

- ① The stress of calf transportation.
- ② What are the potential impacts of transport stress on calves?
- ③ Planning the journey.
- ④ How far can calves be transported?
- ⑤ Are there regulations surrounding journey time for young calves?
- ⑥ What are the space requirements?
- ⑦ Calves fit for transport.
- ⑧ What are the general requirements of calf transport vehicles/trailers?

# Transporting the Calf

## From the farm of Origin

### 1 The stress of calf transportation.

The transport and transfer of calves can be extremely stressful, even over short journeys. This stress can be measured through elevated serum cortisol concentrations (stress hormone). If calves are properly managed pre- and post-transport, cortisol levels should decline within 12 hours of transport. However, cortisol levels can remain high for up to nine days after transportation, suggesting that animals can have a long adaptation period to their new environment. This emphasizes the importance of limiting any further stress during this post transport period.

### 2 What are the potential impacts of transport stress on calves?

Increases in oxidative stress biomarkers and stress hormones are related to episodes of Bovine Respiratory Disease (BRD) and mortality in calves. In addition, the stress induced by the transport of calves of less than one month of age can lead to dehydration and body weight loss.

### 3 Planning the journey.

Adequate planning is key to protecting the welfare of animals during a journey. Before the journey starts consider:

- Preparation of animals for the journey.
- Nature and duration of the journey.
- Vehicle design and maintenance, including roll-on roll-off vessels.
- Necessary documentation.
- Space allowance.
- Rest, water and feed.
- Observation of animals en route.
- Control of disease.

### 4 How far can calves be transported?

According to EU Regulations, calves of less than 10 days of age may travel for a maximum of 100km (approximately 62 miles). You are not allowed to transport calves of less than 14 days of age on journeys exceeding eight hours unless they are accompanied by their mother. Calves should always be transported by the shortest route possible.

### 5 Are there regulations surrounding journey time for young calves?

The length of time travelled is more important than the distance in terms of stress.

On 5 January 2007, a new EU rule on the protection of animals during transport came into operation (Council Regulation (EC) 1 of 2005 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations). The Council Regulation has been given legal effect in Ireland by the European Communities (Animal Transport and Control Post) Regulations 2006 (S.I. No. 675 of 2006). The maximum journey time for unweaned calves in a basic standard vehicle should not exceed eight hours. This length of journey does not negatively impact on animal welfare, even without access to feed for eight hours prior to transport. (<http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/animaltransport/>).

### 6 What are the space requirements?

Young calves require enough space to be able to lie down during transit. In general, small calves (50kg) require 0.3-0.4m<sup>2</sup>/animal. Medium sized calves (110kg) require 0.6-0.7m<sup>2</sup>/animal.

### 7 Calves fit for transport:

- Received adequate colostrum from birth.
- Ears up, clear nose and eyes bright.
- At least 10 days old.
- No scours.
- Standing and walking.
- Dry hair and navel.
- Firm, worn hooves.
- Correctly ear tagged.
- Good weight for age.

*Before departure:*

- Check navel and spray navel with 7% iodine solution before transporting and again in the shed upon arrival.
- Ensure calves are in separate compartments from other classes of stock. Compatible groups should be selected to avoid adverse animal welfare consequences i.e. young separated from older/larger animals.



*This calf meets the criteria and is fit for transport.*



**8 What are the general requirements of calf transport vehicles/trailers?**

The transport vehicle should be in good repair to ensure that calves arrive at their destination with no injury and minimal bruising.

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feed three litres of milk or milk replacer on the morning of transport, ideally as near as possible to the time of departure.</li> <li>• Place calves gently in the calf trailer.</li> <li>• Drive slowly.</li> <li>• Provide some bedding on floor, especially for long journeys.</li> <li>• Check calves on-route.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overfeed calves before transport.</li> <li>• Force calves into the trailer.</li> <li>• Place too many calves in the trailer.</li> <li>• Transport calves in the trunk of a car, sealed container, or anything that restricts airflow.</li> <li>• Tie the calves' legs in order to restrain them.</li> </ul>