Calf Feeding System Saves Time, Improves Health

Bottle calves practically feed themselves with the Kiwi Calf Feeding System. All the producer has to do is mix up the milk and pour it into a 55-gal. barrel. The calves quickly figure out that milk comes from the nipples inserted in the barrel.

Frank Rhinehart, of Phillipsburg, Mo., has been selling the nipples with 30 in. of pvc tubing for more than two decades, after seeing the system during a forage tour in New Zealand.

"It's so much easier and saves a tremendous amount of time," Rhinehart says.

Initially, he was concerned that the group feeding might increase scours, but after trying it out, he found that it wasn't any more of a problem than with bottle-feeding. Plus, being able to check out the calves while they are busy drinking provides the perfect opportunity for early detection and treatment.

Setting up is simple, he says. Start with a clean plastic barrel and drill 3/4-in. holes 2 ft. from the ground.

"They have to be a certain height so the calf has its neck stretched out," Rhinehart says. Combined with a hard nipple that makes the calf suck harder, more saliva is produced to balance the pH in the stomach, which helps prevent scours.

Insert the tubing firmly in the nipple as far as possible before pulling the nipple through the hole in the barrel to lock it in place.

An important key is to have more nipples than calves, Rhinehart emphasizes, so that weaker calves have access to other nipples if they get pushed away. Customers typically space 15 to 18 nipples around the barrel to feed 12 calves, for example.

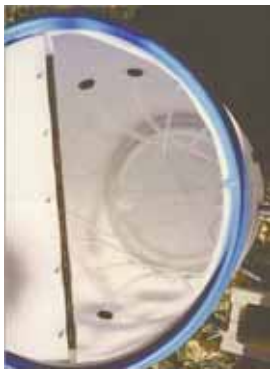
After the calves drink, producers simply add water to the barrel, which cleans out the tubing/nipples when the calves drink later on. (As a side benefit, calves tend to suck on the nipples instead of each other between feedings.) A lid on the barrel prevents debris from falling in, and the barrel can be rinsed out more thoroughly when needed.

For calves that don't catch on how to suck right away, Rhinehart suggests training them individually with a 5-gal. bucket.

Besides saving time, the system has other benefits.

"They like to be together, and if they have grass or calf starter, that allows the calf to be like it would be on its mother out in the pasture - learning to eat grass while suckling its mother," Rhinehart says. "In this system they have milk, grass and calf starter - it's much more natural, wholesome and less stressful than hutch feeding."

He sells the nipple/tubing sets for $5/each (only in lots of 20). The nipples last for years if protected from the sun after feeding is finished, but the tubing should be replaced each season.



With the Kiwi Calf Feeding System, all you have to do is mix up the milk and pour it into a 55-gal. barrel. Calves quickly figure out that milk comes from the nipples mounted on the barrel.

As the only U.S. vendor for the system, Rhinehart has sold to mostly small dairy producers all across the country.

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Stretched-Out Cub Cadet Fitted With Wooden Bed

"I had a lot of fun building it," says Rollan Schnitker, who stretched out a late 1970's Cub Cadet garden tractor, added a wooden bed on back, and a second seat.

"The Cub Cadet had been used for years to remove manure from a chicken house, and was fitted with a pair of 5-ft. front-mounted blades. When the chicken house owner went out of business he gave the tractor to me. I lengthened it by 18 in., added the bed, and made it a 2-seater," says Schnitker. "My wife and I enjoy driving it around town occasionally."

The 2-ft. long, 4-ft. wide wooden bed is made from yellow pine. The seat came off another Cub Cadet.

He stretched out the tractor by cutting off the rear end and welding in a new frame. He also extended the driveshaft and brake linkage. Just for looks he replaced the original tires with ones that are 2 in. wider. He also mounted a 1-ft. wide wooden platform onto both sides of the tractor, bolting them to the footrests. Both platforms are screwed onto a larger wooden platform that supports the 2 seats. Schnitker used 2 by 10's to build the bed's floor and 2 by 6's to build the sides.

He made one more modification to the tractor. "Cub Cadets are equipped with a starter-generator and are known for the generator going bad prematurely, while the starter is still good. So when the generator on my tractor went bad I replaced it with a car alternator. It has a built-in regulator and was a lot less expensive than rebuilding the starter generator," says Schnitker.

Rollan Schnitker stretched out a late 1970's Cub Cadet garden tractor, added a 2-ft. long, 4-ft. wide wooden bed on back, and a second seat.

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Texas Hiking Stick Inflicts Deadly Force

A hiking stick developed by Texas doctor Lynn Nesbitt can be equipped with a variety of deadly killing tips.

"I wanted a hiking stick that could be used to kill the poisonous snakes we sometimes encounter while hiking on my north Texas ranch," says Nesbitt.

To design the tip, he drew on experience treating snakebite victims over his 40 years of medical practice. The stick itself is a 54-in. fiberglass pole. Attachments slip over the end of the pole and pin in place.

The original hiking tip accessory is shaped like a rocket with three sharp 2-in. blades as tail fins. A 5/8-in. steel pin in the center creates 7 in. of total area capable of inflicting trauma on a snake.

"The tip also provides stability and traction for a hiker over steep, rough or ice-covered terrain," says Nesbitt.

Nesbitt has also developed a wilderness survival kit for use with the stick. The kit includes a 4-prong fish spear, a 6-in. saw blade, and a 3 1/2-in. lance/knife blade tip.

"As the population spends more time on urban and wilderness trails, there is an increasing risk of dangerous encounters with poisonous snakes, feral dogs, and other large carnivores, as well as 'bad' people," says Nesbitt. "In each instance, the Texas Trail Stick provides the user with a degree of self-defense surpassed only by having a firearm available."

Nesbitt has worked on a number of alternative attachments including a shovel blade, a flare holder for emergency use and a "ram's-head" tip for picking up objects.

"Turn the stick with the ram's head tip upside down, and it serves as a rest for a rifle," says Nesbitt. "I've made lots of other tips as well. Imagination is really the only limit to possible tips."

"The Texas Trail Sticks are currently being handcrafted to order, but I am looking for a firm interested in fabricating and marketing them," says Nesbitt.

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Lynn Nesbitt made a fiberglass hiking stick that can be used to kill poisonous snakes he encounters while hiking on his Texas ranch.

Original hiking tip includes 3 sharp blades as tail fins and a steel pin at the center (top). Wilderness survival kit comes with a 4-prong fish spear, 6-in. saw blade, and 3 1/2-in. lance/knife blade tip.