

RAISING REPLACEMENTS AT BASSETT'S DAIRY FARM

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Bassett's Dairy Farm  
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Bassett's Dairy Farm is located in Monticello, Jefferson County, Florida, about 8 miles from the Georgia line. We average milking between 1200 and 1300 cows, 60% of which are Holstein, 30% Jersey and 10% Brown Swiss. About 80% of the Jerseys are registered, nearly all the Brown Swiss are registered as are about 50% of the Holsteins.

We raise all heifers that are born and we save bull calves from the top 5% of the registered cows. More than 1000 acres of pasture land is utilized in the replacement program. About 700 calves are raised out each year. We are now privileged to discuss this calf raising program with you.

The herd of heavy springers, both cows and heifers, is observed closely on 2 hour intervals by the foreman of the hospital barn during daylight hours and by the milking foreman at night. These men are well qualified in calf delivery and the proper identification and treatment procedure. The calf is born in the pasture where it is given extra colostrum if needed, the navel is dipped in strong iodine, and it receives a vaccine of scour-VAX-REO within two to four hours. The calf is properly identified with a plastic tag in the ear when it is brought to the maternity ward.

All calves are moved to the calf nursery within 48 hours after birth. Here each calf has a 4 by 8 foot sheltered pen, in a ward of 20 to 40 pens, that is bedded with oat straw. The navels are again dipped in iodine and each calf gets a shot of ADE vitamins.

The calf is fed from 1-2 quarts of colostrum milk twice each day if available or the same of milk replacer. Within a week she is introduced to a 20% protein pelleted calf starter and water, both being free choice. The best hay we can buy is made available to the calf at 4-6 weeks. At seven weeks the calf is tattooed and receives a BVD vaccine. At 8 weeks she is dehorned and weaned. By this time she is eating about 5 lbs of a 20% protein feed and maybe a pound or two of hay.

Calves are moved from the individual pens at 9 weeks of age. At this time the pens are thoroughly cleaned and sanitized. Once each year about 8 inches of dirt is removed from the pens and it is replaced with coarse builders sand.

The calf goes from the individual pen to a dry lot 1/2 acre in size with 20 calves. This lot contains a shed for shade and protection from the weather, a hay rack, a feed trough and a water trough. The lot is harrowed every two or three weeks to aid in the control of stomach worms. At this age weaning rings are placed in the noses of all Jerseys.

In the dry lots the calf is fed about 6 lbs of the same 20% pellets for two more weeks and is gradually switched to a course 17% growing ration until 7 months of age. She has hay, water, salt and minerals free choice. Calves at this age are observed very closely once each day and receive treatment when needed.

At 4 months of age the calf is vaccinated for bangs, blackleg and malignant edema. She is clipped of any extra teats and her permanent tattoo is cross-checked with our records.

At 6-7 months the calf is moved to a 40 calf - 10 acre grass pasture. She is wormed at this time and wormed again each three months until she is springing heavy. Her pasture is visited daily by the feed and hay wagon. At 8 months her grain ration is changed to one that is more finely ground and contains 15% protein. The amount of hay fed is determined by the quality and availability of the grass pasture.

At 10 months of age the heifer is vaccinated for IBR, BVD, PI3 and Lepto-GHP. She is sprayed for flies when needed and dust bags are available in fields. In the fall, August or September, she is treated for grubs and lice with Ruelene.

We normally breed Holstein and Brown Swiss heifers at 750 lbs. Jerseys are bred at 550 lbs. Heifers usually reach these weights at 14 months of age, however we don't like to freshen heifers from November thru March. We find that we can balance out our milking herd better if our heifers freshen from April thru October. As a result about 50% of our heifers are bred later than 14 months. Our average freshening age is about 27 months.

For breeding, the heifer is moved from the pasture to the breeding pen which is connected to adequate pasture for continued grazing. She is bred AI to bulls of equal quality as those used for breeding the adult herd. If the heifer is not bred after three inseminations she is moved to the pasture where there is a clean-up bull. After being checked pregnant the heifer is moved to grass pasture, millet, oats, rye or clover pasture, depending on the time of year.

Six weeks before the heifer is scheduled to calve she is moved to the heavy springer pasture where she was born more than two years before. Here she has adequate shade, water, minerals and grass pasture. She is brought in the hospital barn each day where she is fed grain and is trained to be comfortable and at ease in a stanchion. She is also fed hay and sorghum silage in the pasture. Now she is ready to begin her productive and we hope profitable life in our herd.

Like most dairies, the most serious health problems in our calf program have been scours, pneumonia, navel infections and pink eye. The use of scour-vax-reo vaccine has given us excellent control of early calf scours. BVD vaccination, daily observation and early treatment have reduced our losses to pneumonia to less than 2%. Iodining the navel religiously during the first two weeks and early detection and treatment of pinkeye have reduced our problems in these two areas.

At present, we are not completely happy with our calf housing. Our sheds are economical to construct and we can grow healthy calves in them. The cleaning and sanitation required after each lot of calves, every nine weeks, is very expensive. Replacing the dirt in the pens each year is also expensive. Good fly control in this type of housing is virtually impossible. So, we are seriously looking for a better way to house calves during the milk feeding period. We solicit your advice in helping us solve this problem.

Thank you and come to see us!

COST OF RAISING REPLACEMENT HEIFERS

Feed

0 - 4 mos. - milk, grain & hay	\$ 72.00	
4 - 8 mos. - grain & hay	60.00	
8 - 18 mos. - pasture, grain & hay	150.00	
18 - 27 mos. - pasture, grain & hay (winter)	<u>108.00</u>	390.00

Labor - (including 20% - for administration, insurance and taxes)

(based on 1400 heifers) 72.00

Veterinary & Medicine 12.00

Breeding 10.00

Power, misc. supplies, etc. 6.00

Maintenance & depreciation 20.00

Insurance & taxes 14.00

Interest on investment

1/2 of above costs @ 8% 40.00

Land & equipment 35.00 75.00

\$599.00

(Add \$25.00 for large breeds and subtract \$50.00 for Jerseys)

Computed for an average freshening age of 27 months.