

# Calving Management

The Cafre dairy unit has been designed to best meet the education and training needs of agriculture students and the dairy industry, to enable the delivery of knowledge and technology transfer and to comply with all relevant legislation and animal welfare recommendations.

This is one of a series of technical notes aimed at farmers and students. The notes are designed to provide the level of technical detail required to assist farmers in adopting technologies and practices demonstrated in the new Greenmount Campus dairy unit on their farm business.

Dairy cows are ideally calved in individual pens, which are well-bedded with fresh, clean, dry bedding and ideally cleaned out and disinfected between each calving.

On very large dairy farms where dedicated staff is available at all times to constantly supervise calving, large communal pens may be suitable calving environments.

## Advantages of calving cows in individual vs. group calving pens:

- Cleaner calving environment
- Reduced risk of Johnes disease transfer from cross suckling and bedding contamination
- Easier management of colostrum feeding to the newly born calf
- Calving cow is not disturbed by other herd mates
- Reduced risk of calf being trampled
- Easier management from a health & safety perspective

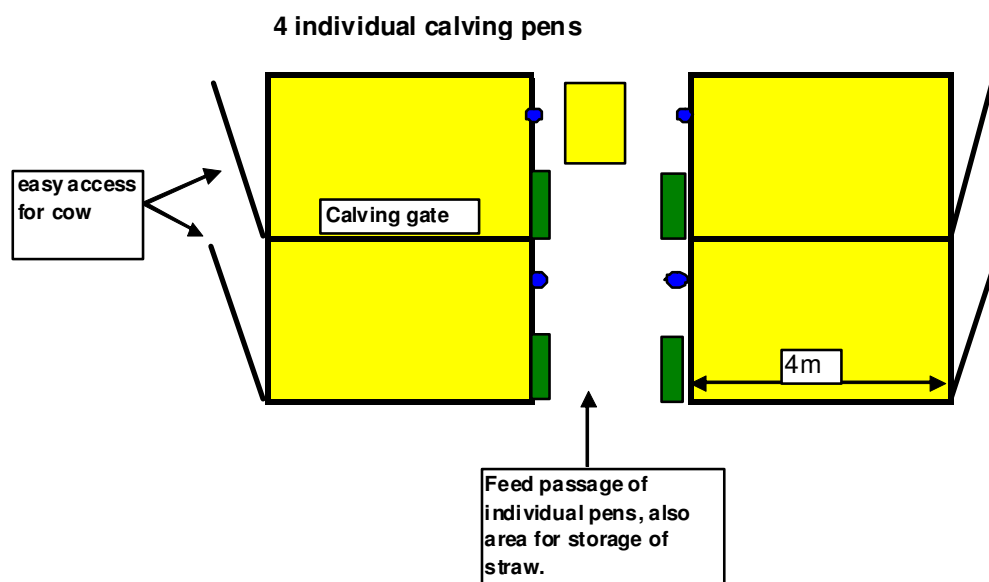


Figure 1. Calving pen layout showing the position of water, feed and calving gate

### Location of pens

The calving pens are one of the most strategic locations on the farm. Three objectives of good calving pen location include:

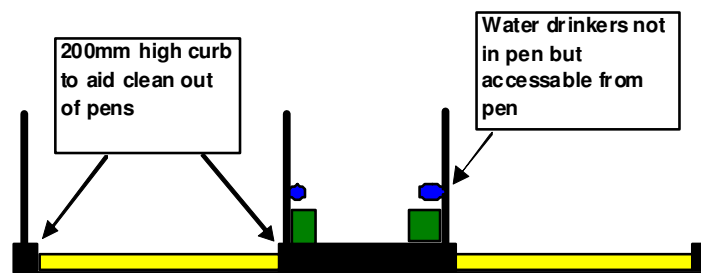
1. Conveniently located for regular checks on calving progress
2. Easy cow movement to and from the pen
3. Located with regular cleaning out of individual pens in mind.

### Number and size of pen

Individual pens must be correctly sized to allow calving assistance in the pen. A minimum size of 4m by 4m is recommended. The number of individual calving pens will depend on the compactness of the herd calving pattern and the length of time the cow is left with the calf. Providing more pens than required is preferable, as this will allow pens to be cleaned, disinfected and rested after each calving.

### Key features of calving pens:

Cross Section of calving pens highlighting key features.



Other important management tips include:

- Convenient mechanical cleaning of individual pens is recommended.
- A 200mm kerb around the pen will provide an edge to scrape against, and will also allow swinging gates to

### Calving Gate

A purpose built calving gate is required in calving pens to aid the calving process if intervention is required.

### Water

Fresh water should be provided in the pens, even if cows are only in pen for a short time. Providing fresh water will reduce the stress on the cow around this period. Drinking equipment should not be located close to the feed area to avoid contamination of the drinker with feed.

### Calving pen management

Calving pens are contaminated at each delivery with fluids, faeces and urine from the dam. Individual calving pens should be cleaned out after each delivery to minimize the risk of disease transfer.

be protected from damage when mechanically cleaning out.

- A supply of clean straw should be stored close to calving pens for convenient bedding.