

**Heifer calves reared on a milk replacer formulated to improve performance and dry feed intakes have increased daily liveweight gains by up to 150g.**



**(above) Bryan Radford says calves are achieving additional daily liveweight gains of 150g on Compumate. (left) Post-weaned calves are on course to achieve a target bulling weight of 380kg.**

Kemble Farms Ltd, which runs a 750-cow herd near Cirencester, started using Bonanza Calf Nutrition's Compumate in computerised feeders to capitalise on the feed conversion efficiency of young calves.

Youngstock manager Bryan Radford said the results had exceeded expectations with average daily liveweight gains hitting 0.76kg/day over the pre-weaning period. He said daily liveweight gains had increased by between 100g and 150g/day in that period.

"We have been really pleased with the performance of the calves," said Mr Radford. "We aim to grow them as much as possible during the pre-weaning period as this is when they have the optimum feed conversion efficiency. These results will stand us in good stead to achieve calving at 24 months."

Compumate has been specially formulated by Bonanza Calf Nutrition to suit systems in which calves of varying ages are kept in large groups and all drink from the same teat via a computerised feeder.

Tom Warren, of Bonanza, said because of possible disease pressure on calves, Compumate includes immunostimulants and natural anti-viral agents. "The calves tend to eat less dry feed so we altered the fat types and source to improve performance and dry feed intakes," said Mr Warren. "We also choose ingredients to ensure consistent flow through the machine."

The bags are designed with a handle for easy hopper filling.

At Kemble Farms, the high yielding Holstein herd calves all the year round. The cows, which have an average milk yield of 12,547kg, are

housed throughout the year and fed a diet including home-grown silage and maize and lucerne.

Newborn calves get five litres of colostrum in the first two hours of life. Colostrum is monitored to ensure it is of good quality. Calves are then penned in groups of five and reared on cow's milk for five days.

After this they are penned in larger groups for nine weeks, with access to a computerised feeder. They are fed up to 8 litres of milk replacer with a concentration of 125g of Compumate per litre with ad lib calf pellets and straw. At weaning the pellet intake will have risen to 2.5kg.

The target is to AI heifers using sexed semen at 380kg. Mr Radford said Compumate is helping him achieve those targets. "It is a win win situation from our point of view because we are hitting target bulling weights and therefore our costs are less. If a heifer took a month longer to get to bulling weight it would cost more."

And he has no problem getting the calves to drink the milk replacer. "They really like it. Whatever is in there is doing them good, we never have problems with calves not wanting to suck," he said.



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