

Watershed Agricultural Program Guideline

2.1.27

GROUP CALF HOUSING

Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to identify key components of a group calf housing system and to establish parameters for including this system in the Whole Farm Plan (WFP) to meet water quality and calf health requirements.

Parameters of Group Calf Housing

To meet water quality and calf health objectives, the following parameters must be met when planning a group housing system.

1. Includes manure separation and management.
2. Provides a controlled or limited calf group sizing.
3. Must allow for a fallow period between groups.
4. Must facilitate adequate sanitation.
5. Includes adequate ventilation in all seasons.
6. Provides adequate bedded space for calves.
7. Includes a designated drinking area with drainage.
8. The calf raising system must meet AEM and/or WAP planning objectives for water quality
9. A farm site specific analysis will be completed comparing the cost of the proposed group calf housing system to other common calf housing options viable for that farm. If the group housing system cost is greater, strong justification must be provided and will be evaluated for approval on a case by case basis.

Parameters for Producer Eligibility

All Calf Housing BMPs implemented to reduce the risk of waterborne pathogens are management intensive. Group Calf Housing requires an even higher level of management. Producers must meet the following management parameters before a Group Calf Housing BMP should be considered.

1. Producer must have a managed calving schedule.
2. Farm must have an existing housing system for youngstock post weaning.
3. Producer must have the management ability and willingness to wean calves at a designated age.
4. Farm must display acceptable calf and heifer growth as evidenced by actual measurements.
5. Farms must have written protocols related to newborn calf care

Farms that are deficient in any of the aforementioned parameters will not be considered for a Group Calf Housing until it can be documented that management has improved to a point where all are met.

Watershed Agricultural Program Guideline

Parameters for Automated Feeders

To meet water quality objectives, automated feeders installed in group calf housing must include the additional following features.

1. Must disinfect feeding teat and milk hoses between calves.
2. Must allow for individualized calf management with the control and recording of feeding volumes, sessions and drinking time by calf.

Automated Calf Feeders that meet all criteria may be funded through the WFP. Funding includes the cost of equipment, utilities and installation but does not included any added features deemed unnecessary for water quality protection. All maintenance and operating costs associated with the system are the responsibility of the producer.

BMP Repair & Replacement for Automated Feeders

Equipment originally funded through the WFP will only be considered for repair or replacement at the end of the specified BMP lifespan, provided that all associated Operation and Maintenance requirements have been met. Any repairs needed while in lifespan are the sole responsibility of the producer.