

National Heifer Rearer of the Year 2013

British dairy farmers have until December 31 to enter the National Heifer Rearer of the Year, the Volac sponsored award. It has £12,000 worth of prizes at stake, including a Volac computerised calf feeding system. Supported by XL Vets and *British Dairying*, the award is designed to raise the awareness of good practice for rearing dairy heifer replacements.

"Getting the young stock off to a good start is critical to any profitable and sustainable dairy enterprise, particularly since heifer replacements cost an estimated £1,200 to rear and over 14% fail to reach first lactation," says Volac's David Neville. "Furthermore, the general shortage of dairy heifers coming in to the national herd is bringing a sharper focus to those first three months of a heifer's life."

Establishing and running a workable calving system is critical not only for maximum survival



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Your chance to WIN the
National Heifer Rearer Award 2013

The Foundation of Your Future Dairy Herd

£12,000 worth of prizes, including a Volac Computerised Calf Feeder

rates, but also producing healthy well grown heifers, says XL Vets' Phil Alcock. "It begins with evaluation of the calf's ABCs—its airway, breathing and circulation, delivering colostrum—the correct quantity, quality, quickly and quietly and then going on to

understand its precise nutrition requirements and disease risks."

Philip Metcalfe, one of our previous National Heifer Rearer of the Year winners, managing a 630-cow unit averaging 9,800 litres based at Washford Farm, Leyburn, North Yorkshire, says providing a good start to life is essential.

"We target calve at 24 months, 60% achieve that date, and we've a new 90% target," says Mr Metcalfe. "We also aim for each living a healthy life accompanied by a long profitable lifetime production."

"Every calf is stomach tubed with a minimum four litres of colostrum within its first four hours. We always test the dam's colostrum for quality with a colostrumeter, and if it fails the test, then we feed frozen pooled colostrum from cows tested negative for Johne's.

"Our calves then progress to

individual pens and they're fed six hours later with 2.25 litres of whole milk treated in our own pasteuriser.

"They remain on twice a day feeding, at 12 hour intervals, for five days before relocating and introduced to a group housed computerised feeding system which offers a number of benefits including labour saving. It relieves us of the menial tasks leaving more time for stockmanship, and offers little and often milk that is consistently mixed at a consistent temperature.

"We feed Heiferlac whey protein based milk replacer with a 23% CP. Our heifers are typically gaining 0.86kg per day to achieve 80kg target weight by weaning at seven weeks."

- To enter the National Heifer Rearer of the Year 2013 award, please contact Volac Freephone on 0800 919 818 or download a copy on line at www.volac.com