

# Speak Out!



As milk producers,  
we know just how  
central animal care and  
handling is to the work  
we do on our farms.

The Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle was published in 2009 by the National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC). It provides guidance to all dairy farmers in Canada and anyone else who cares for dairy cattle. The major sections of the Code are housing, feed, management, pre-transportation preparations, euthanasia and other husbandry practices.

The Code sets the requirements for practices that are deemed acceptable and determines which practices are not acceptable. It also provides recommendations on continuous improvement goals. The requirements and recommendations presented in the Code are mostly qualitative. This document is also the cornerstone of all requirements in the animal care module of our proAction program. The Code is so important that even the Animal Welfare and Safety Act of the Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation du Québec refers to it.

The NFACC normally reviews its practice codes at least every five years and revises them at least every 10 years. The revision of our Code began in January 2019. A Code Development Committee (CDC) was formed of representatives from different backgrounds, including producers, civil servants, experts, researchers, specialists and veterinarians. A Scientists' Committee was also created in parallel to conduct and present a literature review to the CDC in order to help it with the revision of recommended on-farm practices.

The result of the revision work is presented to members of the public, who have 60 days to share their comments on it, in this case from November 29, 2021 to January 27, 2022. Everyone is invited to share their views. For the last edition of the Code, in 2009, just over 100 respondents participated in the consultation. But in recent years, we notice that larger numbers of people are participating in public consultations. For example, in 2014, when the pork production code was being revised, over 4,700 people participated in the consultation, mainly members of the general public and animal rights organizations.

The changes made in the Code will directly impact our farms and daily herd management. It is essential that we take the time to look at the changes, understand the consequences for our respective farms, and make constructive comments during the consultation period. This is our only opportunity to influence the new practices, because all contributions and opinions received will be reviewed by the CDC when it selects the final requirements for the Code. All milk producers are encouraged to participate in the consultation, but also employees, families, advisors, representatives, partners and other members of the dairy industry. We must keep in mind that the requirements will apply to all producers.



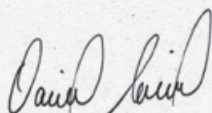
---

It is essential that we take the time to look at the changes, understand the consequences for our respective farms, and make constructive comments during the consultation period.

---

Several tools will be created to explain the main changes to you. A webinar will be presented by Les Producteurs de lait du Québec and Lactanet on December 3. For those of you who will not be able to attend it live, a recorded version of this webinar will remain available to you on the U+ platform of the Union des producteurs agricoles. Information meetings will also be held in all regions. Do not hesitate to check your extranet regularly or contact your secretary or your region's elected officials to learn more about the various planned activities. The animal care requirements that will be included in the new Code of Practice must be appropriate and fair to ensure sound management of our dairy herds. Speak out and participate in large numbers!

Given society's higher expectations of our sector, it is highly likely that this year's consultation will draw even more respondents. Therefore, it is essential for milk producers' voices to be heard and for their expertise to be put to good use. The public comment period, which runs from November 29, 2021 to January 27, 2022, is a critical step in creating a solid Code of Practice. I encourage all producers to participate in it and share their views.



DANIEL GOBEL  
Chairman

# Is Unrestricted Milk Feeding Advantageous for Heifers?

By LÉONIE LAFLAMME-MICHAUD, JENNIFER PHILION, ÉRIC PAQUET, SABRINA PLANTE, SIMON BINGGELI, ANNIE BRÉGARD, JAMIE DALLAIRE and ÉDITH CHARBONNEAU, Université Laval; DÉBORA E. SANTSCHI, Lactanet; ELSA VASSEUR, McGill University

- Milk feeding is certainly one of the factors that allow future dairy cows to express their true potential. The current recommendation is to feed dairy calves 20% of their body weight at birth. Thanks to automatic calf feeders, it is now easier to provide dairy calves with access to larger quantities of feed. But is there a real advantage to feeding them more milk than the current Canadian recommendation?

Pre-weaning is a critical period for heifers. The environment in which they grow and the care they receive in the first weeks of their lives will have an impact on their growth and future milk production. If this critical period is poorly managed, it can have a direct impact on an enterprise's profits. Several previous studies have shown that increasing milk consumption leads to better growth gains and superior lactation performances. However, many of these studies include comparisons with lower quantities than the Canadian recommendation and are carried out in highly controlled conditions. With this in mind, our study aims to compare the effects of both types of milk feeding scenarios on the growth and the average daily gain of Holstein heifers in commercial contexts. In the first scenario, we followed the current Canadian recommendation, while in the second, we provided unrestricted access to milk feed.

## HOW THE STUDY WORKED

The study was carried out on two commercial farms in the Quebec City region without making any changes

to their environments or management practices so that it would be representative of the reality in Quebec. 369 Holstein heifers were chosen and then monitored from birth until one week after weaning. The heifers were randomly assigned to one of the two treatments. For the heifers assigned to the Canadian recommended treatment (20% of body weight at birth), the quantity of milk feed allotted was 8.3 L/d, since the average body weight at birth in the project was 41.5 kg. In both treatments, the heifers received their allotted quantities of milk replacer spread out over the day from an automatic feeder. The weaning process, which ended at 76 days of age, was spread out over 24 days for heifers with unrestricted access to feed and over 12 days for those fed according to the Canadian recommendation; the last 12 days were identical in both treatments. Several body measurements (weight on the scale, thoracic circumference, wither height, and hip height and width) were taken three times per week for the first three weeks and then every other week until weaning. The average daily gain was

calculated by assessing the weight of the heifers.

At one of the two farms, a second phase was conducted in which data was collected on the same heifers at 11 months of age. The objective in doing so was to check whether the effects observed during the pre-weaning period were retained as puberty approached.

## THE RESULTS UP TO WEANING

We note a higher weight gain for dairy calves that were fed without restriction in the first weeks of the treatment and this gain continued during and after the weaning period. The comparison at peak consumption, or at 55 days of age, revealed that the heifers in the unrestricted feeding scenario attained a weight (91 versus 85 kg) and a hip width (23 versus 22 cm) that were significantly higher than the heifers in the scenario based on the Canadian recommendation. The heifers in the unrestricted feed scenario also showed an average daily gain that was significantly higher during the pre-weaning period, i.e. 0.97 kg/d compared to 0.84 kg/d among those in the scenario that followed the Canadian recommendation. There was not a significant difference between the treatments when it came to the average daily weight gain during the weaning period. Thus, when weaning is properly adapted, heifers fed large quantities of milk are not put at a disadvantage during this period. In the stressful post-weaning period, the heifers in the unrestricted feed scenario attained a weight of 116 kg, which was still significantly higher than the 112 kg weight reached by the heifers fed according to the Canadian recommendation.

### RESULTS AT 11 MONTHS

Measurements taken at 11 months were evaluated to find out if the effect observed in the unrestricted feeding scenario during the pre-weaning period was still perceptible as puberty approached. Accordingly, the results showed that the heifers in the unrestricted feeding scenario had maintained their significantly higher weight and hip width compared to the heifers in the scenario following the Canadian recommendation. More specifically, the heifers in the unrestricted feed scenario had on average a weight of 379 kg and a hip width of 137 cm, compared to a weight of 368 kg and a hip width of 135 cm among those in the scenario based on the recom-

mendation. However, no significant difference was observed between the scenarios in the post-weaning period in terms of thoracic circumference, wither height, hip width or average daily gain. These results confirm that the gain obtained at 11 months stems from the same differences that were previously observed in the pre-weaning period.

In light of these results, it can be concluded that even though the performances of heifers fed according to the Canadian recommendation (20% of the body weight at birth) are interesting, an additional gain can be achieved by choosing an unrestricted milk feeding scenario. In fact, when feed is provided without restriction

rather than on the basis of the prescribed quantity under the Canadian recommendation, we note an increase in the weight and the average daily gain at peak consumption among the heifers, which continues even as they approach puberty. To take advantage of the gains associated with unrestricted feeding, however, it is necessary to choose the right time and the right type of weaning, as reported by other research teams in this study. We are now continuing the project by studying whether feed differences at an early age have an impact on the first lactation and the epigenetic footprint of the heifers. We expect to have results on this aspect of the study at some point in the coming months! ■

For input on articles, to obtain information, ask questions or make suggestions on the content of your magazine, please contact

## LE PRODUCTEUR DE LAIT QUÉBÉCOIS at 438 315-9131

or by e-mail: [plq@lait.qc.ca](mailto:plq@lait.qc.ca)

Also, visit the PLQ's Web site: [www.lait.org](http://www.lait.org)

### Centralized Quota Sales System (SCVQ)

#### OCTOBER 2021

Fixed Price: \$24,000.00

	Number	kg of BF/day
<b>Offers to sell</b>		
Total	31	514.23
Eligible for allocation	31	514.23
Successful	31	514.23
<b>Reserve</b>		
Quantity purchased (-) / sold (+)		+0.14
<b>Offers to buy</b>		
Total	1,777	19,940.35
Eligible for allocation	1,777	19,940.35
Successful	1,777	514.37

Participation on a prorata basis in any unprocessed purchase offers of 0.46 kg of BF/day or higher.  
After the sale, the balance of quantities available for regional priorities is 0.00 kg of BF/day for Gaspésie-Les Îles and 0.00 kg of BF/day for Abitibi-Témiscamingue.

#### ALLOCATION OF OFFERS TO SELL AND TO PURCHASE PER PRICE STRATUM

SALES				PURCHASES		
Number	kg of BF/day	Cumulation	Price offered \$/kg of BF/day	Number	kg of BF/day	Cumulation
1	41.90		< 24,000.00			
30	472.33	514.23	24,000.00 ceiling price	1,777	19,940.35	19,940.35

#### ALLOCATION TO BUYERS AND SELLERS

	Number	kg of BF/day	%
<b>Buyers</b>			
Startup Assistance Program	0	0.00	0.0
Holding of less than 12 kg of BF/day	0	0.00	0.0
Reimbursement of startup loans	23	2.30	0.4
Regional priority	0	0.00	0.0
Iteration (0.14 kg of BF/day)	1,775	248.22	48.3
Prorata (1.34%)	1,757	263.85	51.3
<b>2.58% of the offers have been processed</b>	<b>255.30</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>Sellers</b>			
Seller who stopped producing 1 or more month ago	0	0.00	0.0
Offers partially processed in the previous month	0	0.00	0.0
Offers in the current month	31	514.23	100.0
<b>100.00% of the offers have been processed</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>514.23</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Quota prices in Canadian provinces OCTOBER 2021

	\$/kg of BF/day		\$/kg of BF/day		\$/kg of BF/day
Nova Scotia	24,000 ceiling	Quebec	24,000 ceiling	Alberta	48,805
Prince Edward Island	24,000 ceiling	Ontario	24,000 ceiling	Saskatchewan	42,500
New Brunswick	24,000 ceiling	Manitoba	-	British Columbia	-