

# The Calf Ranch

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5:30 a.m. – My alarm goes off. I slowly roll out of my bed and brush my teeth. I want to go back to sleep, but I smell sizzling bacon coming from the kitchen. I sit down with my family for breakfast. After we finish breakfast, we put on our work boots and head to the ranch. This is the start of a typical day in the life of a boy who works on a calf ranch.

After I eat breakfast, it's time to feed the calves their breakfast. Calves are young cattle. Female calves are called heifers. My dad and I head to the dairy, where the mother cows live, to pick up the milk for the calves. Then, my dad and I put the milk in the pasteurizer to better ensure good nutrition. While the milk is being pasteurized, we fill up their buckets with grain and water. When the milk is done being pasteurized, we put it in the milk bottles. We put the milk bottles in our bottle trailer that holds four hundred full milk bottles. Once every bottle is loaded onto the trailer, we hook the trailer to the tractor.

Next, my dad and I grab the milk bottles out of the trailers and put them in the calves' bottle holders, while one of the calf ranch workers drives the tractor slowly enough through the calf hutches to where my dad and I can still pull out the milk bottles. The calves are excited about breakfast as they attack the milk bottles.

After feeding all the calves, we go around with the trailer again to pick up the milk bottle and we clean them out for the next feeding because keeping them sanitary is one of the most important things for keeping the calves happy and healthy.

10:00 a.m. – We go and check if any calves are sick with pneumonia or dehydration. If any are sick, we give them medicine, electrolytes, and an I.V. with fluids to prevent dehydration. Next, we get to check the maternity barn for any newborn calves that were born throughout the night. This is one of my favorite parts of the day because you get to see a new life brought into the world.

When the calves are born, they're slimy and wet, but the mother licks them dry. When you pick the calves up, they start to moo their first moos of their life. We will continue to check the maternity barn every hour to make sure all calves are cared for and have good health after being born.

11:00 a.m.— We go eat a quick lunch so that we don't interfere with the calves' eating schedule. All of the calf ranch workers share food. Usually, I want to stay at the calf ranch because the workers make the best Mexican food I've ever had. After lunch, one of the workers puts the milk into the pasteurizer for the calves' next meal. Then, we repeat the same process as we did in the morning; it's round two.

2:00 p.m. – It's time to go to the weaned pen to see if any calves are sick. The weaned pen is for calves that don't drink milk anymore because they're older. This is another one of my favorite

parts of the day because I get to chase the calves around and they're really playful. We catch any calves that look like they could be sick, so we can doctor them.

Once we catch them, we gently lay them down on their side to give them a physical exam to check for illness. It's very important to find and treat any sick calves because, just like humans, they're contagious and can get the other calves sick too. By 4:00 p.m., we're finished, and it's time to feed the calves their last meal of the day.

5:30 p.m. – All the calves are fed and ready for bed. Now, it's time for my dad and me to eat our last meal of the day. When we get home to eat dinner, I pour myself a fresh, cold, and creamy glass of milk. I reflect on the day's work and the thing I enjoy most about working at the calf ranch is raising youngheifer calves that will one day supply the world with my favorite beverage: milk.