Pair Housing in Calf Hutches
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Milk-fed dairy calves are often housed individually in hutches. Social housing can increase solid feed intake and reduce food neophobia. A low-cost method of providing social contact is to pair adjacent hutches.

Figure 1 – Pair-housed calves are less fearful of novel feed:
When presented with new feed (silage-based TMR), calves housed in pairs ate more feed than individually housed calves; social buffering may reduce fearfulness in socially housed animals.

Objective and Methods

Objective:
To compare the effects of pair housing (using adjacent hutches) versus standard individual hutches on calf fearfulness and solid feed intake.

Methods:
Adjacent hutches were connected to provide calves access to both hutches and a common run. This study took place on a commercial dairy farm in Abbotsford, BC.

Take Home Messages:
• Pair-housed calves consume more starter before and after milk weaning compared to individually housed calves
• Pair-housed calves are less fearful of novelty compared to individually housed calves
• Standard hutches can be easily modified to allow for the pair housing of calves

Figure 2 – Pair-housed calves consumed more starter:
Calves housed in pairs ate more starter before and after weaning from milk compared to individually housed calves; social facilitation may lead to increased feed intake in socially housed animals.