

AS 10.**A SURVEY OF CALF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AMONG FARMERS IN
MID-COUNTRY DAIRY PRODUCTION SYSTEM**

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Calf management stands out to be one of the key determinants of success of dairy farming. Calf survival, prepubertal growth, postpartum fertility and total milk available for sale and hence the profitability of the farm operation very much depends on the method of suckling of calves that the farmer adopts in the farm. A field survey, therefore was conducted to determine the prevalent calf suckling management practices among farmers in mid-country dairy production system as a prelude to a long term investigation into the effects of various calf rearing methods on the above aspects. Two hundred smallholder farms were selected randomly and a field survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire to collect data on calf management practices. Results of the study have shown that 53.0% and 46.5% farmers practiced intensive and semi-intensive management systems, respectively. Extensive management was practiced by 1.5% of the farmers. Almost all the farmers were aware of the value of colostrum feeding. Limited suckling by calves was practiced by 96.4% farmers while zero suckling was practiced by 2.0% of the farmers. The remainder (1.6%) practiced ad-libitum suckling. Within the limited suckling group, 17.0% and 83.0% of calves were allowed to suckle the mothers once and twice a day, respectively. Within this group further differences were found as regard to the method of suckling. Fifty one percent of the farmers left milk in one full quarter for the calf and milked the other three quarters completely while 49.0% farmers milked all four quarters and left the residual milk for the calf. There were also differences as regard to time of suckling; 44.2% allowed both pre-and post-milking suckling and 53.8% allowed only post-milking suckling. the remainder (2.0%) practiced only pre-milking suckling. The average age at weaning was 26.2+12.62 weeks.