

Tubing a calf

- Before using a feeder, inspect the tube for rough edges or cracks.
- Calves only should be fed with a tube feeder if they can stand, or at least sit upright on their sternum. If they are lying flat or their digestive tract already is full, do not use a tube feeder, because it is much more likely you will insert the tube incorrectly and potentially drown the calf.
- Before inserting the tube, clamp or kink the tubing so no liquid can pass. Lubricate the ball tip of the tube with the liquid you are feeding.
- To insert, slide the tube down the left side of the calf's tongue, which will cause it to swallow. Wait patiently for the calf to swallow, then pass the tube down the esophagus, while keeping the calf's nose below its ears.
- Once inserted, you should be able to feel two distinct tubes by pressing the exterior of the calf's neck. One is the tube feeder, and one is the trachea. If you slide the tube back and forth and can't see or feel it moving, or notice sprints of air at the end of the tube, you have likely passed the tube down the trachea. Gently remove the tube and try again.
- If the tube is placed correctly, release the liquid and hold it above the calf to allow gravity to transfer it. Continue to keep the calf's nose below its ears, and allow all of the liquid to pass into the rumen before removing the tube.
- Remove the tube in one swift, gentle motion, while holding the calf as still as possible.
- Thoroughly clean the tube and feeder.
- Consider nasogastric intubation if you have had a bad experience with drowning a calf.