

# The Hokovit Rearing Method – Optimal Calving Age, Optimal Fitness, and No Excess Weight

*In principle, articles about a product from a specific company are not the domain of an independent magazine such as HI. However, we will make an exception for the “Super Heifer Method” of the Swiss company Hofmann Nutrition AG. And not just because Hokovit, the market name for the product, operates the successful Holstein breeding program Hokovit Genetics. Moreover, the Hokovit rearing method does not simply focus on certain additives, but rather the general feeding of animals from calves through to cows.*

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*The Hokovit “Super Heifer Method” is based on the combination of specially developed micro-nutrient supplements with a diet that is based on roughages from a young age.*

It is not as though the method of weaning calves early and feeding intensively from calf to pregnant heifer is something that other companies do not have in their repertoire. But the Swiss family company Hofmann Nutrition is surely one of the leaders for the specific rearing of calves and heifers. There are 15 years of experience behind the Hokovit “Super Heifer Method.” The skill is not to have a heifer calve at 23 months of age or even earlier – the skill is to have that happen without excess weight gain, with optimal fitness, at least 650kg live-weight, and to achieve these things in a cost-effective manner, says Jürg Hofmann, owner of the Hofmann Nutrition Company, which operates in 25 countries worldwide and produces custom feed and highly specialized active ingredients. And because Hofmann maintains a close relationship to breeding, there are some noteworthy names among his international clients. The rearing method, which operates with a clear concept and firm indicators, could be an interesting alternative for Holstein breeders.

## BASIC PRINCIPLE

So what is so special about the Hokovit method? Principally it is about achieving specific benchmarks. ‘The basic goal,’ explains Hofmann, ‘is to realize outstanding development through the first six months of life, even with little milk feeding, and then to attain a constant rate of growth thereafter. Calf rearing requires consistency, for which good health, fitness, and a well-functioning metabolism is required. Something more than traditional feed is needed to achieve these goals, namely supplemental immunity- and metabolism-boosting micronutrients. The basic

framework are goal values of 230kg for live-weight by 6 months of age, 420kg at breeding age of 14 months, and 650kg at first calving. These values are not pulled out of the air, but rather based on the experiences and data that we have collected over all these years. The principle of the “Super Heifer Rearing” is based on the combination of a firm feeding plan with four different products that are mixed with the colostrum, milk replacer, calf grower, and later to the forages.

## SHORT MILK FEEDING PHASE

The start comes with an early feeding of colostrum with a supplement of a premium colostrum. ‘In 80% of the cases, the colostrum from Holstein cows is not as rich as it used to be. A lot of dairy farmers drench their calves to achieve enough passive immunity through the colostrum. We have developed two products that are mixed once with the colostrum at the first feeding which deliver the required immune function and vitality for the newborn,’ explains Hofmann. The milk feeding phase itself is limited to 9 weeks. In total there are only 30kg of milk replacer per calf. ‘The basic diet is very simple. As of the first week calves get free access to hay and a calf starter, which we enrich with a micro-nutrient. A TMR with 80% calf starter and 20% hay is also possible. We work with producers of milk replacer and with feed-mills to mix our additive right into the feed so that it is easier for the farmer to manage. The results of our studies show that the metabolism, immunity, and vitality of calves is significantly better with our method than with the traditional method. The stimulation of the immune system and the metabolism with

our products in the first 6 months accelerates growth, without making the animals fat.’

## NO CONCENTRATES

The third important period in the “Super Heifer Method” is the phase between 7 months of age and the first calving. Due to the early development of the rumen and rumen wall villi, no concentrates are fed from the 7 month onwards. The heifers get high-protein roughage and are only supplemented with a micronutrient mix which supports feed intake, feed conversion, and vitality. ‘But the most important goal,’ says Hofmann, ‘is to bring the calf into a situation early on in which it can get the most out of roughages. Our goal is healthy, well-developed calves, but also to develop true ruminants. Our method is built on simple feed management, low amounts of concentrates, and maximal conversion of roughage into growth, milk, and longevity.’ ●

Goal values of the  
“Super Heifer Method”

| AGE       | LIVEWEIGHT |
|-----------|------------|
| 6 months  | 230kg      |
| 14 months | 420kg      |
| 23 months | 650kg      |

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