

## **BABY CALVES NEED WATER WITH THEIR GRAIN**

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Starting at 4 days of age, baby calves should be fed free-choice water along with their calf starter. Feeding free-choice water increases starter intake and weight gain. In a research study, depriving calves of drinking water decreased starter intake by 31% and decreased weight gain by 38% over those calves provided water free-choice. Free-choice water along with a high-quality calf starter helps develop the rumen so that the calf can digest forages. When calves are fed milk, milk does not enter the rumen but rather the calf's true stomach or abomasum. Thus, milk or water added to the milk will not provide a moist environment for the bacteria to grow in the rumen.

**Take-home message-** Baby calves need water free-choice for optimum and cost-effective growth.