

COLLECTING BIRTH WEIGHTS

The weights of calves taken shortly following birth are used to calculate Birth Weight EBVs within the TransTasman Angus Cattle Evaluation (TACE).

How do you record birth weights?

Many different methods are used to collect calf birth weight. These range from using bathroom scales through to the use of commercially available calf weighing cradles that can be attached to the tray of a utility or the front of a four wheel motorbike.

A few examples of birth weighing devices include:

- hand held weigh scales
- calf cradle mounted on a quad bike or trailer
- calf crate suspended from a utility

When should calves be weighed?

The weight of a calf fluctuates throughout the first week of its life. It is therefore important to weigh calves as close to birth as possible.

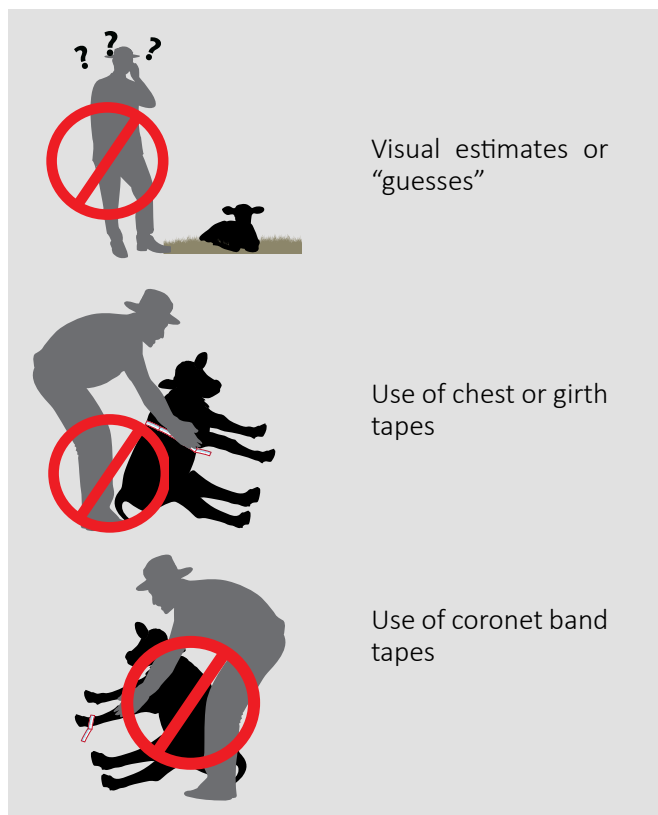
When recording the birth weight of calves, it is important that accurate birth weights are collected using appropriate weighing scales.



Ideally, birth weight should be recorded within 24 hours of birth, and no greater than 48 hours after birth.

Unacceptable methods

Birth weights collected using the following methods are not appropriate for submission to TACE:



Visual estimates or “guesses”

Use of chest or girth tapes

Use of coronet band tapes



- ◇ Birth weights should be recorded for the whole calf drop. Collecting “occasional” measurements, or only collecting birth weights for a subset of calves is of no value and can actually be misleading.
- ◇ Recording birth weight for dead calves is particularly important.
- ◇ A birth management group should be recorded if there are different treatments of the females prior to calving that may affect birth weight.

For example, where one group of cows have had different feed availability. A separate birth management group should also be assigned if the weight of the calf has been affected by special circumstances (e.g. premature calves, the dam was sick etc.).

- ◇ Some breeders have been injured by protective cows while weighing calves. It is important to take due care when collecting this information. A number of agricultural supply stores are now offering calf catching equipment that is designed to improve safety.