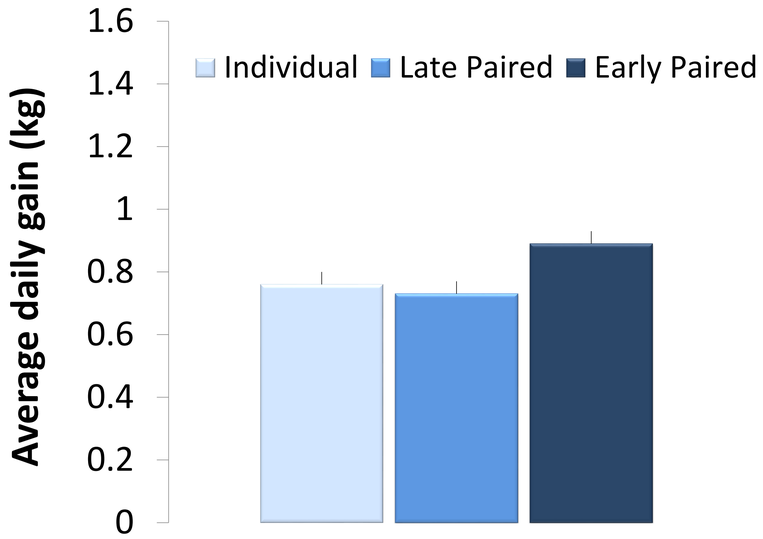
Pair and group housing of calves

Recent research from UBC shows the many benefits of housing calves in pairs or groups from an early age

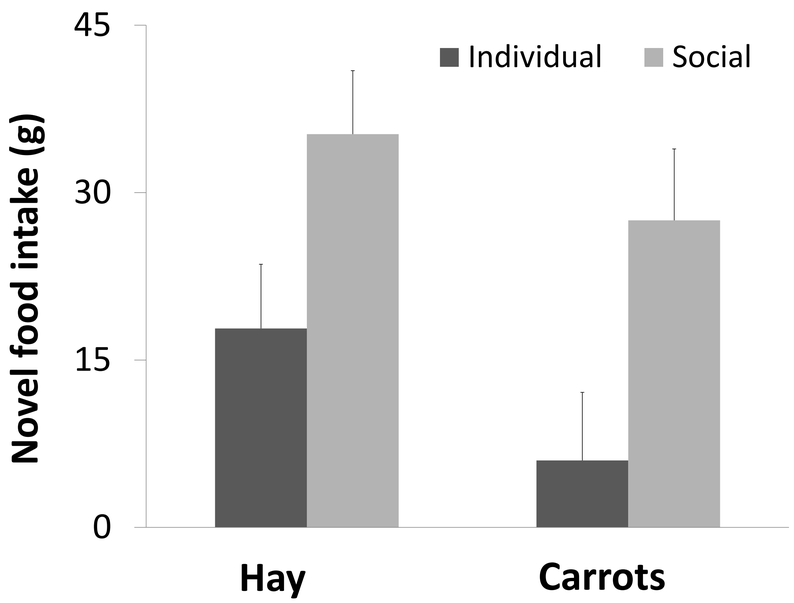
Improved performance when pairing earlier



Early pairing (at 3 days of age) increases intake and weight gains from birth to 70 days of age compared to late pairing (at 6 wk of age) and individual housing.

Costa et al., 2015. JDS. 98: 6381-6386.

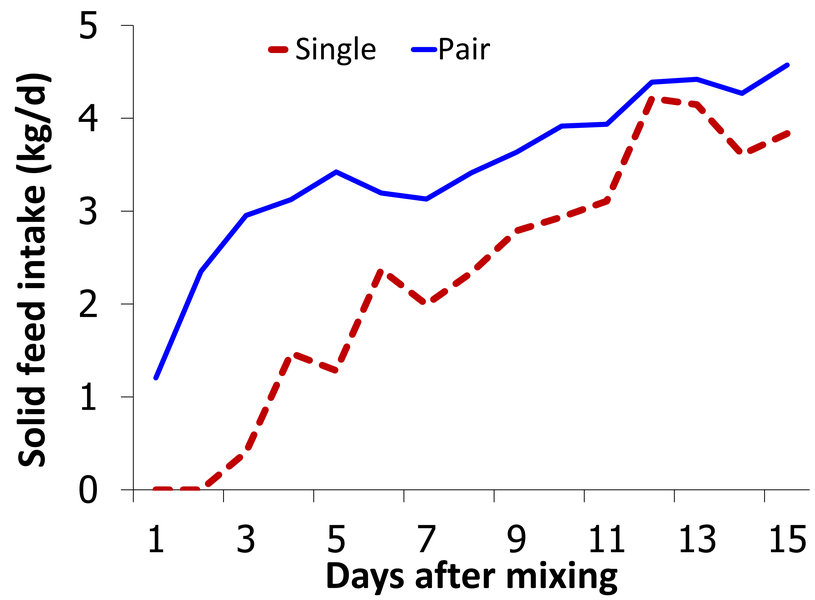
Reduced fear of novelty



Grouped calves are much quicker to learn. Grouped calves eat more of a novel food in a 30 min test period compared to individual housing.

Costa et al., 2014. JDS. 97: 7804-7810

Reduced weaning stress



Paired calves introduced to a group pen after weaning find the new feeder and eat sooner resulting in greater solid feed intake compared to individual housing.

De Paula Vieira et al., 2010. JDS. 93: 3079-3085

Take Home Messages

- Keep calves in pairs or small groups from soon after birth
- Social housing reduces fear of novel feeds
- Social housing improves intakes and gains

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