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**Title: Contact with cows during the young age increases social competence and lowers the cardiac stress reaction in dairy calves**

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Highlights (3-5, max 85 characters per Highlight)

- Comparison of artificial rearing and suckling systems on 29 dairy farms.
- Calves reared in suckling systems responded with submissive behaviour to threat of an adult cow more than calves housed in peer groups.
- No effect of cow-contact on behavioural stress response to isolation
- Social behaviour of calves reared with cow-contact corresponds to the species specific behaviour better than the social behaviour of artificially reared calves.

**Abstract**

Separating calf and cow within 24 h after birth is common practice in dairy farms. Some dairy farmers, however, practice a rearing system in which the calves are nursed by their dam or by foster cows. We investigated if dairy calves reared in such a system (calves with cow-contact) differ in their social behaviour and stress reactivity from calves reared without cow-

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