

Calf Link



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Calf Rearing Newsletter No.10

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And So It Continues....

It's hard to believe that this is the 10th Calf Link newsletter for the season. It will probably be mating before we know it I'm sure. I hope this weather moves over quickly, especially as the calves start moving out of the warmth of the sheds and into the slightly more open paddocks.

Over the last few weeks we have covered many different aspects of calf rearing, from shed preparation and shed hygiene, to calf diseases, treatments and preventions. This week we will cover a few more diseases that are starting to become apparent around the area, Pink Eye and Coccidiosis.

As always, if you have specific questions you would like answered on any calf rearing topic, please email your name and contact details to Elspeth -edunne@cluthavets.co.nz - and we will publish the answers in the next **newsletter**.



Photo Competition

With only a month to go until the Time is running out so get your photo in for a chance to win a *FACE Body and Beauty Gift Voucher* valued up to \$100, thanks to MSD Animal Health. Entries can be email to edunne@cluthavets.co.nz or send to 0275770078.



So it's not only the farm dogs that get in on the milk stealing action! (Kerrie Russell)

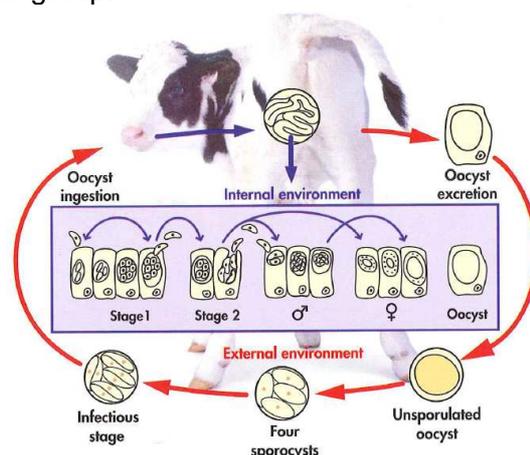
Coccidiosis

Coccidiosis is a disease that can cause significant weight loss and scouring in calves. It mostly affects calves from 1-6 months of age, and the clinical signs become more apparent when calves are under some sort of stress. Typically we see it around the time that calves are started to be moved out of the shed and being weaned, but it can occur later if the calves are stressed by a spell of bad weather.

Cause

The disease is caused by a protozoan parasite called coccidia, that lives in the cells lining the intestinal walls. Protozoa can be thought of in basic terms as the step between bacteria and worms. They can reproduce in two ways, asexually (meaning they don't need to mate) which means they can reinfect without having to be passed out of the animal and eaten again, and the other sexually, which do have to be passed in the faeces, hatch and then get eaten to reinfect

the gut. The eggs that are passed survive up to two years in moist, cool conditions (i.e. South Otago) but hot, dry conditions kill the eggs off in about 3 weeks (i.e. Northern Australia). The way in which they reproduce means that numbers can build up very quickly. Not all animals will show clinical signs when infected. Some become carriers that can spread the disease to others in the group.



Clinical Signs

Calves may vary in the clinical signs they show depending on the burden of the parasite. Signs include inappetence, ill thrift, weight loss, diarrhoea, straining to defecate and the classic 'coccidial flag' which is the smearing of faeces around the back end of the animal (picture below).



Treatment and Prevention

There are several treatments available for these calves, with some varying cost. A course of an antibiotic (sulphadimidine) can be used or an oral treatment (Baycox) can be used as a treatment or as a preventative if you have previously had problems. We would recommend faecal samples to make sure that you are not dealing with high worm burdens and the coccidian can be seen under the microscope. The nature of the disease means that even though all calves may not be showing signs, there is a risk that others in the group are either in the early stage of the disease or that they are developing into the carrier state. Minimising the stocking density, isolating sick calves and moving stock to uncontaminated areas are all ways to reduce the amount of coccidian the calves are exposed to or consume. As stress can trigger the disease it is important to keep the stress on the calves to as minimal as possible.

Pinkeye

Pinkeye is a condition that we have been seeing a bit of in calves recently. As the name suggests an eye condition that can affect animals of any age or gender. It is caused by a bacteria getting into the surface of the eyeball (cornea), often through a scratch or poke to the eye. In calves, it can be seen as the calves get a little bolder with their eating habits and start sticking their heads right into the hay racks or other things around the pen as inquisitive calves often do. The calves will not normally be sick or not want to eat but can be affected if both eyes become infected.

The eye initially becomes cloudy and reddened but this may not be easily seen. Affected eyes

are very painful and sensitive to light, and the animal will hold the eye closed. Sometimes the only thing you will see is a very weepy eye. Once the animal is caught, if you opened the eye you might see something that looks like the first picture below or maybe cloudier and can have an ulcer on the eye itself (second picture).



In the early stages, the animal responds well to an antibiotic ointment, put onto the eye for two treatments, 48hours apart. In severe cases, antibiotics can be placed under the eyelids or if the eye is at risk of rupturing, the eyelids can be stitched closed to enable healing to occur.

It is also important to treat both eyes as it is likely the bacteria is present in both just a little less developed in one eye. It is important to isolate these animals as the disease is highly contagious and can be spread to people as well so wear gloves and wash your hands!

Cool Case!

I'm sure some of you out there have had some interesting calves born at times. This was one seen recently, a two headed calf! Somehow the cow managed to get it out herself!



(Courtesy of P. Benny)