

Calf Link



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Calf Rearing Newsletter No. 1

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WELCOME!

Welcome to the first edition of Calf Link, Clutha Vets Calf Rearing Newsletter. Each week we will be emailing out information to make your job easier. From hot tips, to current conditions seen around the practice, as well as reminders as to time to disbud, vaccinate and drench your calves.

This newsletter is being coordinated by Elspeth, one of our younger vets who grew up rearing calves on her family's dairy farm. One of the main aims behind this is to keep in contact with the people rearing the calves and provide guidance and assistance wherever and however we can.

If you have specific questions you would like answered, or would like to continue to receive the Calf Link newsletter, please email your name and contact details to Elspeth - edunne@cluthavets.co.nz - and we will publish the answers in the next newsletter.



HOT TIP #1

Attend our calf rearing seminar!

Calf rearing may be second nature to some of you having reared thousands of calves. With years of trial and error you have developed a system that works for you. For many of you however, you might just be starting out in the calf rearing side of dairy farming, or have just employed someone who is new to the industry. Our seminars are ideal for anyone new to calf rearing, or people wanting a refresher course. Topics covered will include nutrition, weaning, preventative medicines and the identification and treatment of sick calves. Please contact the clinic if you or your workers are interested.



REMINDER

If you are vaccinating your herd with Rotavec/ScourGuard, early calves need to be done **3 weeks prior** to PSC – i.e. **NOW!**



Photo Competition

Let's face it, calves can be pretty cute and we often have moments where we think 'oh, wouldn't that make a great photo!' So each week we will be running a photo competition for you to show off your cute calves and photography talents, with the weekly winners going into the Grand Final for overall honours (Plus great prizes thanks to the sponsorship of MSD!)





CHECKLIST: Calf Housing Facilities

We tend to forget over the months between each calving season what we need to do to get the calf sheds ready for the new season so here is a checklist to follow:

Pens fixed from last year – no holes; no sharp hazards; limit calf contact between each pen to prevent disease spread - ideally there would be a solid partition between each calf pen.

Bedding in place – straw, sawdust, bark/wood chips or river stones

- Sawdust - make sure it is not tanned as this will cause arsenic poisoning if eaten by the calves. Must be deep enough to provide comfort to the calves and additional sawdust is required to top up the pens during the season.
- Straw – has to be deep enough to provide warmth, not just a scattering on the ground and again will need topping up during the season. Also consider the fact that calves may eat this bedding, and the poo that is on it as well!
- Bark/Wood Chips – similar to sawdust, make sure there is a deep enough bed to provide comfort and warmth to the calves.
- River stones – if used previously make sure sprayed with disinfectant

Water troughs – cleaned, test they are working and don't have any leaks.

Milk feeders – washed and teats replaced. Leaking teats don't enable calves to suck properly. It is the suckling reflex that makes sure the milk ends up in the abomasum and not into the rumen of the calf.

Straw feeders – racks or nets up off the ground are preferred so that the calves don't sleep in it, and contamination with poo is minimised.

Pellet Feeders – set up so calves can access but not stand in or contaminate.

It is also important to remember that the above checklist in most part will be very relevant to the bobby calf shed as well. Clutha Vets offers a calf shed check where, in consultation, we cover all the elements that impact on good calf rearing systems. If you are interested in this service, please contact the clinic, and remember to allow time before the start of calving if changes need to be made.

The Wisdom of Willie!



We all know that it is important to disinfect calf sheds to reduce the risk of carrying over bugs from one year to the next. Disinfectants are also important during the calf rearing period but you don't want to be using one that can cause harm to the calves. Here is a general guide for the use of disinfectants.

Virkon S®

This product has proven activity against 18 virus families that can affect animals and man. It can be used on all surfaces including calf sheds. Its mixing rate is 1:100 but check the label before use. This product would be one we would recommend for disinfecting calf sheds at the start of the season.

Vetacide®

Vetacide is active against a wide range of micro-organisms, even in the presence of organic matter. Suitable for hygiene control for livestock bedding, rearing pens, etc. Mixing rate is 10ml in 4L of water or 25ml in 4L of water for TB control (stronger rate required). This is a good disinfectant for general purpose use such as calving equipment, scrubbing down waterproofs, etc.

Vetsan Concentrate Super®

This product is a high activity sanitiser for all surfaces, including animal housing. Surfaces do not need to be saturated but sprayed with a fine mist. It is safe to spray when calves are in the shed, making it an ideal product to reduce environmental contamination of rotavirus, coronavirus, and other common causes of calf scours in calf sheds.

Envirosan QHF®

This product is for animal bedding and housing sanitiser. It is effective against a wide range of bacteria, fungi and viruses. A minimum contact time of 10 minutes is recommended. The mixing rate for calf pens is 10-20ml/1L water.

Sterigene®

This product is a high level disinfectant and cleaner concentrate, destroying bacteria, fungi, protozoa spores and viruses. Mixing rate is 1:100, and can be used as a general disinfectant for equipment and for washing down waterproofs before entering the calf sheds.