

Calf Link



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Calf Rearing Newsletter No.5

Monday 5th August, 2013

Spring!

August has arrived, and it is feeling a little more like spring. I hope those of you with calves in the shed are starting to find the rhythm of the old routine happening and for those lucky (or unlucky?) enough to have no calves in the shed yet are all prepared for their imminent arrival. This week we will be going over some of the management of sick calves and the overall treatment of the scouring calf - regardless of cause.

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

Thanks to all who have sent photos in, its early days yet so keep them coming for your chance to win a FACE Body and Beauty Gift Voucher valued up to \$100, thanks to MSD Animal Health. Entries can be emailed to edunne@cluthavets.co.nz or sent to 0275770078.



Sick Calves

We have all had to deal with sick calves at some point and we know it can be confusing, frustrating and disheartening at times. For most cases the key things are recognising sick calves early, giving the calves the treatment they need and preventing the spread of the disease to other calves.

1) Hygiene

The first thing you need to think about with sick calves is not dealing with the one that is sick but the currently healthy calves that are also in the same pen or shed.

- Feed the other calves and do your routine work first.
- Isolate the sick calf – remove from pen and into the sick pen. Ideally, you would have two sick pens, one for scouring calves and one for calves sick with other diseases.
- Disinfect the area – if scouring, remove as much of the scours and spray the area with disinfectant.

- Disinfect yourself – when handling sick calves, wear gloves, have separate overalls or waterproofs, scrub yourself down with disinfectant, and have a footbath on entry and exit of pen.

2) Examine the Calf

Some problems are very obvious, and others are a little more subtle. All sick calves should have the following done:

- How bright/sick is the calf – is it willing to feed, is it collapsed on the ground
- Take the temperature – normal is between 38.5-39.5°C.
- Is the calf dehydrated – pinch the skin over the ribs and see how quickly it falls back, if it is slow, the calf is dehydrated. Other signs include dry noses and sunken eyes.
- What noticeable signs of disease are present - scouring, coughing, snotty nose, weepy eyes, etc.

3) Treatment Options - Scours

Treatment of sick calves will vary from farm to farm, and from what disease the calf has, but the treatment principles for each disease they require will be the same.

Fluids

Scouring calves very rarely die from the bug that they are infected by but from dehydration. A scouring calf loses a lot of fluids and these calves need to be replaced with small amounts and frequently.

A mildly dehydrated calf (40kg) requires maintenance (4L) and extra to replace lost fluids – total 8L

A severely dehydrated calf (40kg) requires maintenance (4L) and an extra to replace lost fluids – total 10L

This is a lot of fluids, so the more feeds you can give them, the better. The rehydrating protocol outlined below is the absolute minimum a scouring calf should receive.

Rehydrating the Calf

Day 1

- Take off milk for 24 hours (not longer)
- Feed good quality electrolytes in to replace milk and to rehydrate the calf (Revive or Diarrest recommended – see newsletter no.2)
- Stomach tube weak or slow/reluctant drinkers
- Ensure ad lib access to fresh water

Day 2

- Give 3 feeds: electrolytes in morning, milk midday, electrolytes in evening

Day 3

- Give 3 feeds: milk in morning, electrolytes midday, milk in evening

Day 4

- If calf recovered, can continue on milk alone
- Don't put calf back with other calves, keep in separate 'recovered' group until out of the shed

Severely dehydrated calves can appear to be in a coma and this is from the blood becoming too acidic. These calves are in a dire situation and most likely require IV fluids to rehydrate them, as well as oral fluids and supportive care.

Antibiotics

Antibiotics are not routinely needed for calves with scours. It is common to find nutritional scours in calves, often in the bossy and fast drinking calves. Nutritional scours do not require antibiotics and often respond well to just electrolytes for the dehydration. Calves with high or low temperatures often have either a primary or secondary infection with bacteria. Calves that have blood in the scours also are at risk of bacteria entering the bloodstream. These calves will benefit from antibiotics, an amphotrim product such as scourban or amphotrim bolus (tablets). Bovipen does not work for scouring calves.

Nursing Care

Just like when you are sick, a little bit of TLC can go a long way into making calves feel better.

- Keep the calves in a warm, dry and draught free pen
- Use a calf cover to help the calves reduce the amount of energy they need to stay warm
- Free access to clean water, some calves may drink of their own accord
- Metacam – 1ml per calf, once only, as a pain relief/anti-inflammatory injection to help reduce the damage to the intestines and reduce high temperatures.

Also remember to record all treatments of sick calves, and this can include observations if more than 1 person is looking after the calves. Also remember the drug withholding periods. **Do not use antibiotics or anti-inflammatory drugs on bobby calves.**



Cold Calves: Continued!

We spoke about the treatment of cold calves last week, but there have been a few points that may have been missed:

- If calves are cold to the point of being in a coma, they need to be warmed up prior to tubing. Only tube calves that are in a condition that they can swallow to reduce the risk of aspiration of milk/colostrum that may run back up the oesophagus.
- Give dextrose before warming calves. If they have already used all their available energy in trying to keep warm, they will have nothing to run on when we turn their metabolism back on with warming.