

# Calf Link



Balclutha  
03 418 1280

Milton  
03 417 8032

Calf Rearing Newsletter No.6

Monday 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2013

## And the Calves continue to come!

I think for most of people the calm before the storm has ended and the calves are starting to come thick and fast, with hopefully more heifers than bulls and with as minimal assistance as possible. Wishful thinking?

This week's newsletter is going to look at developing the rumen and the start of the transition from milk to grass. Also we will touch on the humane euthanasia for calves, be it induction calves or sick calves.

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](mailto:edunne@cluthavets.co.nz) - and we will publish the answers in the next **newsletter**.



## DEVELOPMENT OF THE RUMEN

When the calves are born, their stomachs are developed only to the point at which they can digest milk. The rumen is little more than a small sack which has to be fed and colonized with bugs to turn it into a stomach that can breakdown grass.

The rumen works by providing an environment for bacteria to break down and digest the food the calf eats. The by-products of the bacteria and the bacteria themselves then become food as they are washed further down the digestive tract.

To stimulate development of the rumen we need to provide food that has enough energy and protein for the bacteria to thrive and multiply. We also need to provide a 'scratch factor' to stimulate rumen development and to provide a home for the bugs to live in.



## 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 email to [edunne@cluthavets.co.nz](mailto:edunne@cluthavets.co.nz) or sent to 0275770078.



### So what is the best rumen development food?

- Straw does not stimulate rumen development because it is too low in energy and protein.
- Calf pellets, although providing protein and energy, are made up of fine particles so do not stay in the rumen long enough.
- Calf meal is ideal, especially the muesli types, it has enough protein and provides
- provides scratch to get the calves used to chewing and swallowing solid foods.

### Are all meal mixes created equal?

The short answer is no, so make sure you read the packet and pay particular attention to the following.

- Protein content should be 20-22%
- Fat should be as low as possible, preferably below 3%
- Metabolisable energy should be around 12 MJME

### How long do you feed rumen development food for?

Start early with your calf meal feeding, certainly from one week of age.

- Encouraging the calves to eat the meal can be achieved with a variety of practical tricks including skipping a feed or mixing the meal with a little milk powder.
- Having a small amount of meal constantly available will allow the calves to slowly get used to eating it.
- No calf should be weaned until it is eating one to one and a half kilograms of meal.
- Regardless of your system the meal should be feed for a minimum of 2-3 weeks after weaning.

## ★ Product Promo ★

### Clutha Vets Calf



### Meal SGT Dan

Clutha Vets Calf Meal is a mixture of muesli and pellets that is suitable for feeding to calves from 3 days to 11 weeks. The amount calves eat will depend on their age and other dietary feeds but it is safe to feed the Clutha Vets Calf Meal up to 2kg per day. The calf meal is not a stand along feed but should be fed in combination with straw for rumen development and does not replace milk until the calves are eating at least 1kg per day.

The meal contains a by-pass protein that increases total digestion and the balance of protein and energy increases the digestibility.

Within the pellet of the meal, calcium and phosphorous are included to increase bone and muscle development. The scientifically balanced micro and macro vitamin and mineral premix provides an overall boost to calf health. This meal also contains a coccidiostat, for the prevention of coccidiosis but means it must NOT be fed to dogs or horses as can cause irreversible damage to the heart.

For ingredients list or analysis or for ordering of the calf meal, please contact the retail staff at either Balclutha, Milton, or Clydevale.

## Humane Slaughter of Calves

The need to slaughter or destroy animals on farm is an unfortunate but necessary part of farming. Induction calves, sick or unviable calves (or older stock for that matter) all need to be treated in a timely, welfare approved manner. In this day and age, it is no longer acceptable to plead ignorance to appropriate means of euthanising animals. So the following information is a reminder of what is accepted and what is not. Please also find attached to this email a copy of DairyNZ Practical Guide to Humane Slaughter.

At the start of each season, a plan should be put in place regarding the humane slaughter of calves:

- Destruction should take place at the earliest practical opportunity
- Calves must be destroyed in a manner that does not cause undue stress, pain or discomfort
- The person undertaking the task of destruction must be appropriately trained and competent to do so – where use of firearms is the chosen method, the person must be appropriately licenced
- Have two people that are trained to euthanise animals – destruction of animals does not wait for someone to come back from days off
- Non-viable newborns – those that have been identified as neither acceptable for replacement of bobbies due to being premature, or showing signs of a defect must be destroyed as soon as possible after birth
- Destruction of older calves due to injury, disease or other condition that have failed to respond to treatment, must be destroyed as soon as practical once the decision has been made to euthanise.
- Approved means of destruction are either captive bolt and bleeding out or free bullet through the front of the skull

### ***Blunt trauma to the head is not acceptable at any stage for any animal***

If you are faced with a situation of not having an appropriate means of destruction, remember Clutha Vets are able to come and euthanise animals via the administration of drugs or via captive bolt at any hour of the day.