

Calf Link



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Lumps, Bumps and Pus!

I'm yet to find a vet out there that doesn't have a fascination (often bordering on obsession!) with pus. And I'm sure its not just vets. There is nothing better than going out to lance and flush a nice big abscess, even if we don't admit it at the time. In saying this, of course we would rather not have the animals developing infections that result in these abscesses. This newsletter is focused on preventing infections in calves, both at the navel and from ear tags. We will also look at covering the difference between navel infections and hernias because the treatment required is very different.

I hope the calving and calf rearing is going well for you all. 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**.

Ear Tag Infections

As we start to get into the full swing of calf disbudding, it has been noticed that a number of calves are been seen with infections associated with ear tags. There are two main reasons why these infections occur. The first reason is due to inadequate hygiene when putting the tags in. While we appreciate the practicality of the procedure, some done as the calves are born, at times on the late night calving check, hygiene is still important. Disinfecting the tags before putting them in as well as making sure the ear is clean can be simply done with a spray bottle of iodine.



MSD
Animal Health

Photo Competition

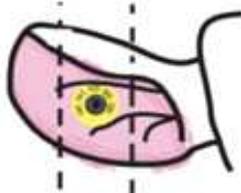
Thanks to all who have sent photos in already. The clock is ticking so get your photo in for a chance to win a *FACE Body and Beauty* Gift Voucher valued up to \$100, thanks to MSD Animal Health. Entries can be email to edunne@cluthavets.co.nz or sent to 0275770078.



Never too young to start – Calving Success
(Paul Crawford)

The second reason is the incorrect placement of the tag. The tags shouldn't just go anywhere in the ear, but should be placed between the lines of cartilage in order to avoid the blood vessels running though the ear along the line of cartilage, for both button and large tags. A lot of blood after tagging is a sign that the tag wasn't in the right spot.

Correct



Incorrect



Incorrect



Incorrect

Swollen Navels: Is it an Infection or is it a Hernia?



The above two images show some extreme navel swellings. One is a hernia and one is an abscess. Can you tell which one is which?

Good for you if you can but I can't! Both navel hernias and abscesses from navel infections can cause swelling of various sizes in the same location. Size does not necessarily give any indication of the cause of the swelling. While abscesses of any size are not good for the calf, hernias the size of either of the above pictures can cause a lot of concern and will require veterinary attention.

There are some simple ways to work out whether or not the swelling is an infection or a hernia that you can do prior to calling the vet (but please don't hesitate to call if you're not sure!).

Navel Hernias

A hernia is a term given to a hole or deficit in the abdominal muscle layers or connective tissue. Typically we will see:

- No heat or hardness to the swelling
- No pussy discharge from cord
- Calf not affected by the hernia unless quite large.

Hernias can be reduced/disappear back into the abdomen when you push gently on the contents (often easiest to assess if calf is lying on its side, so not working against gravity).

We measure or assess hernias in terms of how many fingers we can fit into the hole. Small hernias, 1-2 fingers, can be left to reduce and scar over on their own. Larger hernias, (3 fingers plus) will need surgery because the deficit is too big. While the hernia probably doesn't do the calf any harm directly, the risk is that intestines or other abdominal cavity contents will slide through and become trapped within the hernia and can cause the blood supply to the organs to be cut off. It may be important to remember that hernias can be hereditary, so you may not want to breed from these animals.

Navel Infections / Abscesses

Navel infections are considered to be largely preventable in most calf rearing systems. Navel infections are the result of

- Inadequate navel cord disinfection in the first few days of life while the navel is still moist.
- Cows calve in dirty/muddy conditions
- Calf sheds are not clean or thoroughly disinfected between groups, if reusing calf pens is unavoidable

Signs of navel infection include:

- Swollen navel
- Heat on touch
- Calf may show signs of discomfort or pain when touched
- May be a discharge from the navel itself (pus and/or smelly)

Navel infections can be treated via the following method or an alternate one that may have been specifically put together for your farm.

- Antibiotics: 6ml Bovipen for 5 days
- Anti-inflammatories: if painful

Navel infections seem rather simple or small but can have further complications for the calf such as:

- Blood poisoning (bacteraemia or septicaemia)
- Abscesses in the liver, lungs or elsewhere within the organs
- Joint infections (joint ill)
- Meningitis
- Death!!!

As for many conditions, the sooner the treatment is initiated, the better it is for the calf and often the quicker the recovery is. Checking calves navels daily for the first 4 days in the shed (whilst applying the disinfectant) will make sure these conditions are noticed early.