

Calf Link



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Spring!

So it seems that the calendar has finally caught up with the weather. I don't think anyone can complain about the weather for the calving season so far, but let's just hope it continues!

With the warm (-ish) weather continuing, I am starting to see calves out in the paddock, merrily playing around. It is important to remember that just because they are not in the shed, bellowing at you every time you walk past, does not mean that they don't still need your attention. The transition period from milk to pasture is a critical time for the calves as they move closer to becoming ruminants. In this newsletter, we will look at key things to remember during this time as well as a few interesting cases that have cropped up over the last few weeks.

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**.

Joint Infections!

On a recent debudding job, a calf was noticed with a very swollen knee and was a little lame on the leg. The diagnosis was made to be a joint infection.

As we have mentioned before, joint infection in calves typically are the result of bacteria gaining entry to the bloodstream via the moist navel and becoming lodged in the joint. In the body's fight to get rid of the bacteria, all the dead cells become pus and cause the joint to become swollen and often hot to touch.

The treatment of these cases is with antibiotics and anti-inflammatories, and is often worth discussing with a vet to ensure that the most appropriate antibiotics are being used.



Photo Competition

Thanks to all who have already sent photos in to us. With only a few more weeks of calf newsletter to go out, 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.



A little Guernsey calf called 'Pretty', bit of a poser I reckon! (Fernybank Guernseys, Australia)

In some cases, a joint flush can be performed. This is a procedure where the joint is clipped and prepared surgically. Needles are then placed into the joint and sterile saline (and on occasions an antibiotic solution) flushed through the joint. This procedure is done on some of the more severe cases and can significantly improve the chance of recovery for that calf.



Weaning Calves

Each system of calf rearing and weaning is different, and each farm is different. Calf rearing is all about finding what system works for you and running with it. With all systems, there are some basic requirements that need to be met to ensure that the calves are still going to keep growing and meeting targets.

Firstly, there is a difference between once-a-day feeding for rearing calves and once-a-day for weaning calves.

Once-a-day feeding – Early on

- Once-a-day feeding of calves, early on in their life can be a good means of managing time and labour for the farm. BUT...
- It does not mean you can just feed them the same amount once a day or just one feed a day.
- Calves need to receive 400-500g of milk solids to grow and be healthy. If you are feeding 3L of milk that is 10% milk solids, that calf is only receiving 300g of milk solids which is insufficient.
- Fortifying the milk by adding the required amount of milk powder (in this example, 150-200g per calf per day) will enable the calf to receive the required milk solids but access to fresh clean water must be provided at all times.
- These calves can be weaned by slowly reducing the amount of milk solids they receive to encourage them to eat more muesli and straw

Once-a-day feeding – for weaning

- Decreasing milk fed to increase the amount of

grain/muesli/pellets eaten is needed to transition the calves onto a ruminant diet.

- Calves should be nearing their weaning weight (as based on their Minda Weights BV system, which provides a more accurate guide than the previous breed set weights)

When do I stop feeding milk?

Milk should only be stopped once the calves are eating 1-1.5kg/head of muesli or pellets. Stopping earlier than this will lead to a significant check in weight gain as the calves won't be getting enough protein or energy from their intake of grass alone. All calves will either lose weight or reduce their weight gain during weaning, we just have to try to minimise this through the continuation of the feeding of meal.

When should I stop feeding muesli or pellets?

Feeding a protein/energy supplement after the milk has been removed aides in reducing the drop in weight as well as lifting the protein and energy in their diet. Muesli/pellets can be fed for as long as you want as a supplement for the calves. The main reason for stopping is due to the economics of feeding the meal rather than the calves no longer benefiting from the addition to their diet.

The other benefit from continuing the meal is that most commercial products contain a coccidiostat to prevent coccidiosis. Coccidiosis is a disease that can cause considerable scouring and weight loss in older calves and I will be covering it in more detail in the next newsletter.

It's all About Navels!

I know it seems that we are always talking about navels, but here are a few interesting queries that have come up recently and we started wondering is anyone else has seen this or has had a problem with the same things?

1) Continual Bleeding from the Navel

A call came from a client to ask for some advice about a calf that hadn't seemed to stop bleeding from the navel. They had tied the navel off with dental floss but it appeared to be just forming a sack of unclotted blood (top picture). The calf had progressively become weak and no longer wanted to stand. The calf was euthanized and a postmortem done. Inside the abdomen, the veins that are open before the calf is born but close soon after were full of unclotted blood as well (bottom picture). The calf was diagnosed as having a blood clotting disorder that basically meant that if it was left, it would have bled out into its abdomen. Has anyone else ever seen calves like this?

2) Navel Sucking

We have had a few people recently asking about calves that suck each others navels. While it seems fairly harmless to both the calf sucking and the calf being sucked, it can be a bit of a problem with navels not drying out and the calves being at greater risk of navel infections and the complications that result from that. Also in the bobby calves, it can mean calves not being able to go because of wet navels even though they might be old enough. Has anyone experienced problems with this themselves and even better found a way to stop the calves from doing it?

If you can help, please email Elspeth: edunne@cluthavets.co.nz

