

Calf-Link

Clutha Vets Newsletter for Calf Rearers



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Issue 2 2017



Things are definitely busy on the calf rearing side of things, with sheds filling fast, and most replacement calves now on the ground. It is great to see some of the early calves out in green grassy paddocks on the sunny days, fingers crossed for a few more of those so that paddocks can dry out.

We have been having a lot of people coming in with questions about calves - from colostrum quality to milk replacers, from drenches to mineral supplements. We are always happy to answer any question you might have on any topic. It does make a nice variation in our day from the calf scours outbreaks that seem to be plaguing the district.

Remember, if you have any questions, queries or interesting cases that you would like to discuss or share please get in touch with Elspeth or Anna at the Balclutha Clinic (03 4181280).

SCOURS ALERT!!!!!!

We, along with the rest of the country it seems, are having a significant increase in the number of calf scours cases we are seeing this year, and in particular in this early part of the season. Wet weather and warm temperatures are thought to be contributing in the North Island, perhaps it is the same (at least the wet bit!) down here too.

With any scours outbreak, it is best to identify which bug it is that you are dealing with so that treatment can be specifically tailored towards the correct cause. At present we are mainly seeing Rotavirus infections, but there have been a few cases of cryptosporidium in the last few days. We have in-house testing available for all of the main causes of scours, which usually means answers for you the same day we receive the samples, and we can quickly get onto the right treatment and prevention programmes.

What is Rotavirus?

Rotavirus is probably the single most worrying infectious cause of calf scours. This virus typically causes scours in calves 4 - 14 days of age. Calves can start showing signs as soon as one day after they become infected, so spread between calves and pens is very rapid. Therefore it can be very difficult to control, with whole sheds commonly becoming affected. Calves develop severe yellowish watery scours and can rapidly become dehydrated, depressed, and reluctant to drink. If the calves can be kept hydrated, and treatments such as Rotagen® are used, there may not be too many calves lost, but outbreaks are emotionally draining, time consuming and financially costly.

In this Issue -

- Scours Outbreak
- Supportive treatments for sick calves
- Calf Debudding

Selling or Buying Calves?

There is huge demand this year for Friesian and beef bull calves, with many dairy farms selling calves onto rearers rather than on to the bobby truck.

While it is great to see this happening, please take some time to consider diseases that might be going with your calves. If you have scouring calves, there is a risk that the ones you are selling can take the bug with them, even if they are well themselves.

If you are buying calves, take the time to run your eyes across other calves in the pen or shed, and make sure they are not showing signs of ill-health. Signs such as obvious scouring, dirty tails, and sunken eyes are all indications that the calves might be carrying an infection with them, that potentially you don't want to take with you.

If you are looking at calf rearing for several seasons, consider developing a relationship with a single supplier to reduce the risk of having problems with scours and other diseases.

Supportive Treatments for Scours- What is out there?

Enerlect®

Electrolyte (fluid) therapy must be the mainstay of all scours treatment. Enerlect is an electrolyte product used to maintain hydration in calves that are scouring from either nutritional or infectious causes. Cost effective, and available in large quantities, Enerlect is a great choice for any type of mild scours, or for calves that are recovering from an infection. It can be mixed up in a bucket and left in a pen for calves to access ad lib, but do make sure they also have access to clean water at all times.

In more severe cases of dehydration other electrolyte products may be more appropriate.

Biopect®

Biopect is a natural product marketed as an anti-scour prebiotic. It contains electrolytes and dextrose to help address dehydration issues that are often the biggest problem with scours. It also contains pectin from dried fruits that coat the lining of the stomach and intestine to help reduce the damage done by the bugs.

Fed preventatively, or as part of treatment, Biopect can be great for calves that may be under stress from transport, weather or disease. It doesn't have any withholding period so is safe to use on all calves, bobbies included.



Rotagen® and combination products

Rotagen provides passive gut immunity to protect against infectious causes of scours. Once the cause of the scours outbreak has been identified Rotagen can be used to treat affected calves and to prevent new infections.

Rotagen comes as a straight rotavirus treatment, or rotavirus in combination with crypto, *E.coli*, salmonella, or coronavirus.

The powder can be mixed with milk and preferably individually drenched to each calf to ensure correct dosing. It can be given to any age calves and is not dependent of calf weight.

In a severe outbreak of rotavirus scours Rotagen can be a lifesaver (yours and the calves!).



Bentonite® / Optiguard® / Bobby Binder

There are a lot of products on the market that are great to help slow the rate of passage of milk through the gut. They do not provide hydration to sick calves or address the cause of the scour.

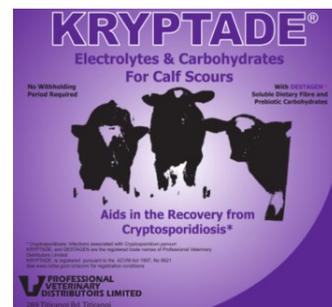
These products may have a place when calves are scouring mildly from over feeding, a change in feed (milk to milk replacer, etc), or environmental stresses.

Bentonite, Optiguard and Bobby Binder can be given to the calves individually, or added to milk/meal to help make the renin clot in the stomach of the calf, and promote normal gut motility. It can be a personal preference as to what product you use, but all of these are safe to use in all calves, including bobby calves, as there is no withholding period.

Kryptade®

Kryptade is both an electrolyte and a treatment for calves with scours caused by *Cryptosporidium*. The specific combination of electrolytes has been shown in studies to help calves affected by crypto to get back to feeding faster, with potentially less electrolytes needing to be fed.

Kryptade isn't considered a mainstream electrolyte but is great for situations where crypto is the known cause of the scours.



Scourban/Amphoprim Bolus

Scourban and Amphoprim bolus are antibiotic products that can be used when a specific bacterial cause of scour has been identified, but should not be used as a general treatment for any scouring calf.

Scourban and Amphoprim Bolus are NOT for use in bobby calves.

These products, while they have their place, are required to be used with the same consideration given to any other antibiotic.

They do not replace the use of electrolytes or other supportive treatments, remembering that it is the dehydration that can kill a scouring calf rather than the bug itself.



Debudding Calves

Clutha Vets offer a painless calf debudding service for calves over 2 weeks of age. We sedate the calves to provide what's called 'chemical restraint' that is safe for calves, and removes the need for physical restraint. Once sedated, local analgesia is inserted around the horn bud and the hair removed. The entire horn bud is then removed and the wound cauterised, preventing any potential regrowth of the horn, or of further bleeding. All calves' navels are then checked. Most clients also like us to remove extra teats from heifer calves. Bull calves can be castrated at this time allowing for accurate, stress-free placement of rings. As an extra, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories such as Metacam or Ketomax, can also be used.

The advantages of our system include the painless procedure with stress free handling of the calves, no labour input requirement from busy farm staff, and the general health check of the calves with a vet present on every job. Concurrent procedures such as ear tagging, DNA profiling, vaccinating and BVD testing can also be performed easily while the calves are sedated for debudding.



Caption this photo!

This year's competition is "Caption this photo!". In each newsletter we will have a photo for you to get creative. Simply message your best caption(s) to 027 485 6014 or email - admin@cluthavets.co.nz to be in to win this fantastic chilly bin (with goodies).

This weeks photo below -



Last week's photo caught while walking the cow to the shed -

"Are we there yet?"

Congratulations to this week's winner who goes into the draw for our fantastic prize

Have a great photo you want to share? We will also be happy for you to send photos in to be considered for the next "Caption This Photo!"