

Calf-Link 1

2015



Welcome

Welcome to the first Calf-Link newsletter for the season. Calf-link is a newsletter for the calf rearers, and anyone else who is interested. It will be sent out via email over the next few months to keep people thinking about what the calves need, husbandry practices to keep on top of, as well as providing a way to keep people informed about problems we see popping up around the district. If you know of someone who might be interested in receiving this newsletter please let the clinic know and we will ensure that they receive them. You can email smcnutt@cluthavets.co.nz or call 03 418 12802. Also, if you have questions about specific cases or topics, please call or email Elspeth (edunne@cluthavets.co.nz).

IN THIS EDITION

- PREPARING THE CALF SHEDS
- COLOSTRUM
- WARMING

Calf Shed Check Lists

While many sheds are already on the go, here is a checklist to make sure everything is covered before calves move out into the older calf sheds.

- ◇ Pens – no holes, no sharp hazards, limit calf contact between each pen to prevent disease spread. Ideally there would be a solid partition between each calf pen.
- ◇ Bedding in and sprayed with disinfectant. The choice of bedding is not as critical as the correct use of the bedding.
- ◇ Water troughs – cleaned, test they are working and don't have any leaks. All calves must have access to clean water at all times.
- ◇ Milk feeders – washed and teats replaced. Leaking teats don't enable calves to suck properly and it is the suckling reflex that helps makes sure the milk ends up in the abomasum and not into the rumen of the calf.
- ◇ Straw feeders – racks or nets up off the ground are preferred so that the calves don't sleep in the straw and poo contamination is minimised.
- ◇ Meal Feeders – set up so calves can access but not stand in or contaminate. Small amounts replaced daily helps to encourage eating.

COMPETITION TIME!

Want to win a massage to rest your weary bones and muscles at the end of calf rearing?

In each edition, we will have a question for you to answer. Simply text the answer and your name to 027 4182410 and correct answers will go into the draw to win an hour massage with SHINE Massage Therapy.

What should the concentration of methylated spirits be in the iodine navel spray?

The draw will take place at the end of October, so keep reading for more

Snow, Ice and Cold Calves

Given the weather over the weekend and looking ahead, bringing in cold and wet calves might be happening for a little longer yet. There are a few things you can do to help warm them back up without getting too complex.



Feed Warm Colostrum

Normally when calves are brought in cold, they are recumbent, depressed and a bit out of it mentally. Calves need energy for the brain to function and often these calves are running out of reserves. Feeding good quality warm colostrum not only helps physically warm the calf but provides the much needed energy for the calf to start shivering and warm itself. Feeding the calf should be the first thing that you do, before starting to warm it up. For severe cases, refer to the IP dextrose instructions.

Cover the Calf

Even if you don't have proper calf covers then straw, old blankets or even old meal bags over the calf can help keep some of the warm in the calf. Protect it from drafts and make sure it is lying on a deep layer of bedding will all help.

Active Warming

Some people are lucky enough to have heat lamps or heat mats to help warm calves. If you are not one of these, then there are still some things you can do to warm calves. Hot water bottles, or even old milk bottles filled with hot water can be placed alongside a calf under its cover and can help, particularly for those really dire calves. We tend not to wash or wet the calves further than they already are, as they will lose heat as they dry again so the warming can be short lived.

IP Dextrose

The injection of dextrose (sugar) into the abdomen of a calf can be a quick way to provide it with energy. There are some detailed instructions sheets available at the clinic, so please contact us for a copy.

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Colostrum: Myth Busting

**“The yellower the colostrum, the better it is”
FALSE!**

So often we hear that good colostrum is the yellow stuff and the less yellow the worse it is. This is really not the case, and we have seen perfectly good colostrum discarded due to its colour.

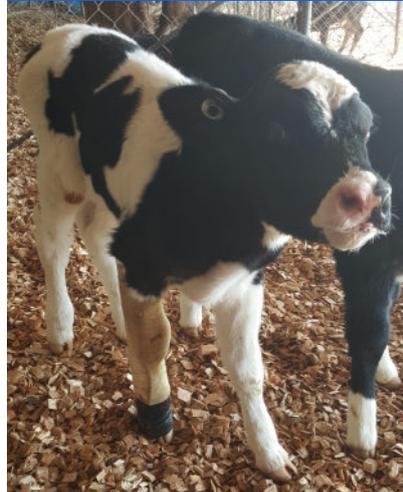
The yellow colouring comes from the vitamin B-Carotene - same stuff that makes pumpkins and carrots orange. The yellow colour, which is naturally higher in some breeds than others, comes from how much B-carotene is in there, not really an indication of the antibody level of the colostrum, which is the most important thing. Antibody level is much better measured using a colostrometer, which gives an indication of the density of the colostrum, which is a much better indication of quality.

Golden Rule of 10%

Ideally calves should receive 10% of their body weight in colostrum in the first 12 hours. The practicalities of this will vary between farms, but all calves should receive 2L of colostrum in their first 12 hours. Don't rely on the calves getting colostrum from mum - only 40% of calves get enough without intervention.

We say 12 hours because after this time, the calf's ability to absorb the antibodies declines, and is almost completely gone in 24 hours.

Broken Leg at Calving



Through the correct positioning of calving ropes, broken legs shouldn't happen. Occasionally they do, and we get called to assess. Meet "Cass", a 4 day old calf who sustained a leg injury at calving and is now walking around sporting a splint for her lower leg fracture. Although prognosis is uncertain due to the position of the fracture, fingers are crossed and we will see the results in 3 weeks.

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