

# Calf-Link 3

2015



## Welcome

With the calves coming thick and fast I hope you have time to grab a coffee and have a quick read of the second of our Calf-Link newsletters. I have just come back from a quick trip back across the ditch, where it was a pleasant 24 degrees and they are looking for rain. Perhaps we could organise a weather swap for a week or two?

This newsletter, following a few queries, we are discussing the topic of navels. Swelling around the navel can be difficult to determine what is an infection and what is a hernia, what to give antibiotics and what not too. Navel gazing isn't a weird obsession vets have, but can give a lot of insight into potential problems throughout the calf rearing system.

If you know of someone who might be interested in receiving this newsletter, please let the clinic know and we will ensure they are put on our email list. Also, if you have questions about specific cases or topics, please call or email Elspeth (edunne@cluthavets.co.nz).

## The Importance of Shelter

While it might seem like of common sense, to put new born calves in a shed, we often get asked when they calves can come out of the shed. Sometimes the answer is simple - if the weather is like this, then definitely not yet. However the situations get more complicated when there might be a disease outbreak in the shed - what is going to be the lesser of the two evils? Ultimately, all calves need some form of shelter. Even if you have had to move some outside earlier than expected, protection from the weather is vital. It is just too cold for them to be left in an open paddock and some form of shelter should be provided, even simple straw bale wind breaks are better than nothing.

For those with questions about their shed and whether or not it is adequate, here are a few simple rules that can help you decide -

- ◇ Sheds should face the north and pens be twice as deep as they are wide
- ◇ There should be a physical barrier between pens, for at least the back half of the pen - this stops drafts sneaking though the shed.
- ◇ You should be able to stand in the back of the pen in a short sleeved shirt and not feel cold.

And while we know you can't exactly pick up a shed and turn it around, things like wind break cloth and straw stuffed between two gates can help to warm a shed up and stop the drafts.

## 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 027 418 2410, and correct answers will go into the draw to win an hour massage with SHINE Massage Therapy. With a slight change in plan we will now have a massage prize for each newsletter!

This week's question—

*What is the normal temperature range for calf?*

Congratulations to the winner of last week's quiz question:

*Michaela Page*

The answer: All calves should receive 10% of its body weight (or at least 2 litres) in colostrum in the first 12 hours of life.

## Navel Infections

The navel is the connection point between the fetus and placenta. It acts like a straw between the cow and calf, being the point where blood from the cow enters and exits the calf, providing all the nutrients required for development, and takes the calf's waste away. When a calf is born, the navel and associated vessels start the process of closing. This takes time, and contamination can enter the 'straw' before closure is complete, causing infection anywhere the attached vessels go. The signs you see will vary depending on where the bacteria end up.

A simple external navel infection:

- ◇ Hard, thickened navel
- ◇ May have pus at the tip if squeezed
- ◇ Small infections can turn into abscesses if not treated

If the infection goes up the straw and into the calf, it can:

- ◇ Infect the vessels that are connected to the navel. This can be felt as one or two thick cords inside the abdomen of the calf.
- ◇ Lodge in the liver, causing abscesses there. The calf will likely be unwell. It may be that no clear signs are shown, just that the calf is ill-thrifty, or the animal may die prematurely.
- ◇ Get all the way through the liver, and set up infections in the joints. It may be that one or many joints are affected.

### TREATMENT:

- \* 6ml Bovipen per 40kg for 5 days OR
- \* Betamox LA at 1ml/10kg given every 48hrs for 3 doses.

If a calf is off-colour or has a high temperature (normal is 38-39.5°C), anti-inflammatories can be used to help to get them eating, comfortable, and on the road to recovery faster.

### PREVENTION:

- \* Calve in a clean environment where possible.
- \* Pick up calves twice a day.
- \* Use a clean carrier to transport the calves from the paddock to the shed
- \* Spray navels as soon as the calf enters the calf shed at a minimum, if not at pick up as well. Use 10% Iodine, NOT Vetadine,
- \* Bedding in pens should be dry and disinfected often.
- \* COLOSTRUM!!!!

## Navel Hernias

Navel hernias are the main thing that gets confused with navel abscesses. Hernias develop when the abdominal wall doesn't develop properly and the small hole where the umbilical cord runs through is bigger than it should be. The size of the hernia will vary so size can't be relied upon to determine the difference. Way that hernias and navel abscesses differ are:

- \* Hernia aren't normally as painful when palpated as infections can be
- \* Hernia don't have any sort of discharge
- \* Abscesses tend to be hard or firm where as hernias are soft and fluid feeling
- \* Hernias aren't normally hot like infections can be
- \* Hernias can be reduced - meaning they can be pushed back into the abdomen of the calf were as abscess are not able to.

Hernias will sometimes heal themselves but may require surgery to fix them. Whatever you do, do not lance anything without being 100% sure what it is. The last thing you want to do it to cut into an abscess to let it drain and have it actually be a hernia. Intestines need to stay on the inside of the calf!!!!

## Which is Which?

See if you can see which of the following is an infection and which is a hernia? It can be difficult in only photos but see how you go (answers below)



1 - Hernia, 2 - hernia, 3 - abscess, 4 - infection

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