

Calf-Link 6

2015



Welcome

We have come to our last edition of the Calf-link for this season, and we hope that you have survived to the end of the season as well. While it has been a bit of a mix of seasons for the calves, hopefully now the sun will keep shining, the grass growing and the calves transition smoothly to a pasture based diet. It is at this time of year, when farm focus moves onto mating, crops and tractor work, that the calves can sometimes be forgotten. In this last Calf-link, we are going to focus on reaching target weights, as well as vaccinations.

Don't forget, any questions, concerns or issues - we are always only a phone call away!

Weaning? - Check the Weights

Weighing calves is really the only measurable, and truly accurate way, to monitor their growth rates. There are people, and you might be one of them, who feel they can get a good idea of how the calves are going by just looking at them, but you can have good looking calves that aren't actually growing! Calves are often assessed on body condition instead of their structural size which is the factor that has the biggest impact on production and reproduction later on.

Properly grown heifers result in benefits to the dairy herd including:

- improved fertility
- reduced age at first calving
- reduced calving difficulties
- increased milk production
- reduced culling rates of first lactation heifers

Important points for calves:

- Calves' weights should be compared to their expected mature weight based on the live weight breeding value.
- Calves should not be weaned based on age.
- Calves should only be weaned if they are eating 1-1.5 kg meal per day, not based on their present weight according to their breed.
- Calves should be at 30% of their expected mature cow weight by the age of 6 months.



Weigh calves - it's easier than elephants!

COMPETITION TIME - LAST CHANCE!

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

This is our last competition— simply text your name with the correct answer to the question below to—027 418 2410, and you go into the draw to win an hour massage with Shine Massage Therapy.

This week's question—

How many strains of Lepto are protected against in 7-in-1 vaccine?

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

Karen Holmes

The answer: Calves will not need to be drenched for worms until they have been on grass for at least THREE WEEKS.

When the calves are in the shed they aren't exposed to the worm larvae that we find on the pasture. Oral drenches work by killing the worms present in the gut, not as a preventative. With the lifecycle taking 3 weeks, drenching before this has reduced benefits.

Vaccinations - what, when, why and how?

The vaccination of stock is important to control diseases that are, in most (if not all), cases preventable. The diseases we vaccinate against in young calves include:

- Tetanus
- Pulpy kidney
- Black disease
- Black leg
- Malignant oedema
- Leptospirosis



Many people know the names of the diseases covered by calf vaccines, but due to the effectiveness of the vaccination programmes, not a lot of people have seen the diseases themselves. They are all rapid, difficult to treat, usually fatal, and therefore very costly compared to the price of vaccination.

Tetanus

Tetanus is a disease that is caused by a toxin produced by the bacteria. The toxin affects the nervous system, preventing messages from the brain to the muscles to get through affectively. Animals become really stiff and are often described as standing like a saw-horse. Affected animals typically die from respiratory failure as the muscles that make the animal breath in and out become paralysed. Not a pleasant way to go really.

Pulpy Kidney

In cattle, this disease predominantly affects the intestines, not the kidneys as the name suggests. The name comes from the disease in sheep, where the kidneys are found to decompose really quickly. This disease process happens rapidly with the toxins produced in the gut being absorbed into the blood stream and damages the blood vessels. Clinical signs are rarely seen with these animals, they are just found dead in the paddock, often the best ones in the mob!

Black Disease

This disease hasn't been reported in New Zealand, but is in here for the Australians who use the same vaccine. When fluke damage the liver, conditions are set up that

activate bacterial spores, causing severe liver damage and death.

Black Leg

As the name suggests, this one typically affects the muscles (often the legs), and causes an acute gangrenous infection. Luckily, the toxins produced by the bacteria usually kill the animal before the leg rots away too much.

Malignant Oedema

Malignant oedema affects not the muscles but the all the tissue around the muscles. Animals develop a temperature and become dull as oedema, or fluid, builds up around the affected area which may feel cold to touch. Again, it is the toxins that causes the death, but I am sure the infection doesn't feel that good either.

Leptospirosis

We have all heard about lepto and its risk to people. Contact with any body fluid from any infected animal is a potential risk for contracting lepto yourself. Vaccination of the animals not only protects them, but it protects us as well. The vaccine contains two strains of lepto - *Hardjobovis* and *Pomona*. These are the two most likely strains that affect cattle.

When to Vaccinate?

With the vaccines available today, calves can be vaccinated at a younger age than previously. Early vaccination provides the calves with protection against the above diseases, and in the case of leptospirosis, prevents the calves becoming carriers for the disease. Calves can be vaccinated as young as 4 weeks of age with their booster 4-6 weeks later. However, if calves receive their second or booster shot under the age of 3 months, they will require a booster at the age of 6 months. This not only lifts their immunity but brings the calves into line with the timing of the whole herd vaccination. All stock require an annual booster for ongoing protection.

Where to Vaccinate?

The site for vaccination in calves is on the side of the neck. Vaccines for 5-in-1, 7-in-1 or 10-in-1 all go subcutaneously (under the skin) in cattle.

Balclutha Clinic

2 Wilson Rd
Balclutha

03 418 1280

admin@cluthavets.co.nz

Milton Clinic

106 Union Street
Milton

03 417 8032

milton@cluthavets.co.nz

Clydevale Store

2229 Clydevale Rd
Clydevale

03 415 9121

clydevale@cluthavets.co.nz



CLUTHA
V.E.T.S.

www.cluthavets.co.nz