



In this issue we will focus on Coccidiosis, a disease which can have huge health and economic implications for your calves, and is commonly seen at this time of year. It is caused by a protozoan parasite (coccidia) that damages the gut lining. Infected calves shed oocysts (eggs) in their faeces and these can survive in the environment for up to two years in the right conditions. Calves ingest the oocysts from infected pastures or sheds and these multiply in their intestines causing damage to the intestinal lining.

Coccidiosis

Clinical signs:

- **Diarrhoea** – often with fresh blood initially. After a few days the amount of blood decreases and large amounts of mucus is passed.
- **Straining, weakness, loss of condition, stunting of growth**
- Calves are most at risk between **3 and 8 months** of age
- Calves can die from **dehydration** and **electrolyte loss**.
- **Chronic cases** will either die or recover after 2-4 weeks.
- Surviving calves will often show **reduced growth rates** due to the damage to their gut lining.

Diagnosis:

Along with the clinical signs above, faeces can be tested for the presence of coccidial oocysts. This is NOT included in most “snap” tests.

Treatment & Prevention:

Manage the environment to prevent build up of oocysts, and manage the calves to reduce their exposure and susceptibility.

- Ensure pens are clean and have sufficient bedding
- Regularly disinfect teats, feeders, troughs and anything else calves may put their mouths to
- Disinfect pens between calf mobs using a disinfectant that will kill oocysts
- Prevent overcrowding of pens
- In the paddock, use feeders raised off the ground and regularly change the feeders' position

In-feed coccidiostats should also be used. These prevent coccidia from reproducing. Most calf meals have a coccidiostat present, but read the label to check yours does! Once meal feeding has stopped, an infection can become established, especially if there has been heavy environmental buildup of oocysts.

Remember to check out our facebook page -
facebook@cluthavets.co.nz

Risk Factors

- Dirty, wet pens
- Overcrowding
- Calves in the same paddock each year
- Multiple age groups housed together
- Stress — calves are very susceptible when their immune response is suppressed - eg weaning, dehorning or poor nutrition
- Stopping meal feeding (coccidiostat removal)

Top Tips!

Make a step from a tree-ring to make access into pens/paddocks easy and safer:



This year's competition is for your top calf rearing tips and pearls of wisdom. Each newsletter we will publish a pertinent pointer and all contributors will go into the draw to win this handy chilly bin packed with goodies. Message 027 5500 505 with your tip and the reference “Calfink” and be in to win!

