



CLUTHA
VETS

Calf-Link



by Olivia Hickman & Sam Howarth

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Welcome to the 2020 Calf Link. It's that time of the year again, so over the next few weeks we will be issuing a bi-weekly calf link newsletter to keep you up to speed on all things calves.

Calf Link is for anyone involved or interested in learning about calf rearing so if you know of someone who wants a copy sent out to them, let us know at admin@cluthavets.co.nz and we will get them on our list. If you have a topic you would like us to cover ask for Olivia or Sam on (03) 418 1280.

Shed-ding some light on calf housing

The ideal calf shed is one where the calves are going to be clean, warm, and dry. A good shed is a key step to ensuring your calves have the best start to life. We want their energy going into growth, rather than fighting off sickness and keeping themselves warm.

Key attributes to a good shed are:

Well ventilated, but not draughty—this is extremely important as we want new air circulating to avoid illness such as pneumonia. However, we do not want a breeze blowing through the shed, bringing in cold weather and rain on wetter days.

Free draining floors—calf sheds need a free draining ground layer to reduce buildup of waste and excess water during the season. Free draining soil is perfect. However, if you aren't lucky enough to have the right soil type on your farm, river stones are an excellent, cost effective base layer which helps with drainage.

Winter is an excellent time to check the bones of your shed. Think about how last season went and what you want to change.

- Were your gutters blocked causing water to run into the shed during heavy rain?
- Do your water troughs need to be reinforced to prevent leakage during the season? Are they near the front of the shed?
- Could weed mat be used as a cheap calf pen partition?
- Improvements don't have to involve expensive renovations. If you are stuck with what to do, give us a call and we can work with you to come up with some inexpensive game changer options to help make your, (and the calves'), life easier in the spring.



Outside pens

As the calves get older they tend to be let outside. Unfortunately spring can sometimes be very wet, and diseases such as Yersinia can affect your calves if the paddocks are getting too wet and cold.

Just as we don't want our calves to be in wet conditions while in the shed we also don't want them to be in wet conditions when they are moved outside. Calves still need access to shelter to protect them from the cold conditions outside.



Pens

Ideally all pens should have solid partitions, this will dramatically slow the spread of disease through your shed if a breakout should happen. Sick calves should be completely separated from the rest of the mob.

Initially each calf requires 1.5m² of floor space. This should increase to 2.5m² from 3 weeks of age. Measure your pens to determine their maximum capacity.



Bedding

The NZ Veterinary Association recommends sawdust, wood shavings, and bark chip (all untreated) for bedding. The depth of bedding should be 30cm.

Due to waste filtering through over the season your bedding will require regular top ups. Areas where the calves are fed are likely to become quite wet, so it may be beneficial in these areas to scoop out the wet material regularly and replace with a new thick bedding layer.

Whatever your preference, it needs to be clean and dry. Here at Clutha Vets we like to do the "squish test". Pick a couple of spots in each pen and kneel down for 20sec. If after this time your knees are still dry, perfect. However, if you are noticing a bit of wetness coming through, new bedding needs to be put down.

