

Calf Link



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Spring is getting busy!

Firstly, I would like to apologise to you for the lateness of this newsletter. The last week has been a flurry of calvings, sick calves, metrichecking and calf debudding. Whilst I much prefer to be outside, it means that newsletters often are left to the last minute.

Out and about we are seeing a lot of scouring and sick calves. As busy as it gets, it is still important to maintain good hygiene practices in your calf sheds, and to identify, isolate and treat sick calves in order to stop the spread of disease. If you need assistance with sick calves, please feel free to contact myself or another vet at the clinic and refer to previous newsletters about the basic principles.

Remember, if you have specific questions you would like answered on any calf rearing topic, please email your name and contact details to Elspeth - edunne@cluthavets.co.nz - and we will publish the answers in the next newsletter.

The need for water

All calves need access to clean, fresh water at all times. While it might seem like common sense, sometimes in stressful and busy times common sense can be anything but common. It can be very disheartening to go into sheds and see calves with no water. As part of the welfare code, all animals should have access to clean water.



There is a myth out there that calves that are given access to water won't drink milk. No child will refuse icecream, even though they are too full to eat their broccoli. Calves are the same with milk. Studies have shown that calves that have access to water actually grow faster, and eat more muesli/hay/straw, than those that don't have access to water.

Calf Scours - testing has become easier!

In recent weeks, we have had many calls about calf scours. It seems we have reached that time of calf rearing where bug burdens in sheds have reached the levels that calves are scouring.



The problem with scours is that the colour, consistency, or smell don't really tell us what bug is causing the problem. While the basic principles of scour treatment all relate to keeping the calves hydrated with electrolytes and other supportive therapies, if the causative agent of the scours is known, more specific treatment can be given to control the spread of scours through the calf shed.

At Clutha Vets, we now have an in house testing system to identify the main causes of the scour the same day that you bring the sample in, with the exception of Salmonellosis. The faster turnaround, allows you to implement control and prevention protocols to help minimise the risk of the scours spreading through the shed. If you have any questions, or would like some assistance with calf scours, please contact either myself or another vet at the clinic.

Clutha Vets Services: Calf Disbudding

Most people will appreciate that the simplest, easiest, and most effective time to remove horns from cattle is as calves rather than as adult cattle when they are bigger, and have started using them against other cattle. It's never pleasant to go and stitch up a cow that has had its udder ripped open by a horn.

The advantage of removing the horn buds as calves is that up until a particular age (typically around 6 weeks of age), the buds are not attached to the skull. You can feel the bud present but can move it around independent of the calf's skull. Removing the buds at this point means that it can be done with just the hot iron rather than having to cut the horns off. With any type of disbudding or dehorning, thought must go into the welfare of the animal and the pain associated with the procedure.

Clutha Vets offer a pain-free calf disbudding service using local anaesthesia to block sensation to the horns, removing the pain caused by the hot irons. All calves are sedated for the procedure as well as for ease of handling to administer the local anaesthetic, and for the disbudding procedure. Calves ideally are disbudded from 2-6 weeks of age.



The Clutha Vets disbudding service also includes:

- Checking all navels for signs of infections or hernias, and treat where necessary.
- Removal of additional teats on replacement heifers to prevent problems once the heifer has entered the milking herd.
- Castration of bull calves – only if required, don't worry we won't do your replacement bulls!
- General health assessment of the calves and identification and treatment of calves if required.

If you would like more information regarding this service or pricing, or would like to book in calves for disbudding, please contact your respective clinic's reception, they are happy to help.

The Wisdom of Willie!



The calf scour battle is about to start for some people, and it can be very frustrating and unrewarding at times. In most situations most calves will respond to electrolytes, but sometimes electrolytes alone are not sufficient. If you have previously had a scours outbreak in your calf shed and have done testing to identify the causative agent, be it rotavirus, coronavirus, E.coli or cryptosporidium, and were unable to vaccinate your cows with either Rotavec or Scourguard, there are still products available that can help prevent and treat these causes of scours.

Rotagen Combo

Rotagen combo is a product that can prevent or treat if necessary, rotavirus infections. Rotagen can be fed to calves from day 1 and should not be needed for longer than 14 days as the calves are mostly out of the risk period for rotavirus by this time. It can be mixed with the milk, or individually drenched, to allow more accurate dosing. Rotagen is a product that can have other protective immunoglobulins added to the product to broaden the viral or bacterial cover. Additional protection can be provided for cryptosporidia, coronavirus, e.coli and salmonella. As the cost of the product increases with each additional immunoglobulin type added to the mix, it is recommended that the source of the scours is identified to enable targeted prevention and treatment.

Prevention:

- All calves receive 10g/day for 5 days (50g total give to each calf).

Treatment

- Sick calves receive 20g on the first day then continue on 10g/day for 3 days.

The advantage of Rotagen is that there is no WHP on it, so not an issue if accidentally fed to bobby calves.

Halocur

Halocur is a product that can be used for the prevention and treatment of cryptosporidium. It doesn't kill the parasite but slows its multiplication within the intestines to allow the calf to develop its own immunity and fight off the infection using its own antibodies. Halocur is specific to crypto and if it is going to be used as a treatment it has to be done within the first 24 hours of signs of diarrhoea before the parasite numbers become too high. Again, these calves need supporting with electrolytes during the scouring period to prevent dehydration.