

Calf Link



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Last of the Season!

As the final calves are hitting the ground now, the Calf Link is also coming to the end for the season. I hope you have all had a good season, with minimal hairy moments. Feedback from retail staff is that this season has been one of the better ones for a while, with fewer electrolytes and other supportive products being purchased, and I hope this has been the case for you. Around the traps calf debudding, the calves are looking well, so congratulations to all!

As the calves move out of the sheds and onto pasture we need to start thinking about the next husbandry procedures – vaccinating and drenching. If you are not on the Clutha Vets vaccination program, please don't forget about vaccinating your calves.

It is also really important not to forget the calves, as the farm focus changes from calving to mating. Monitoring regularly though weighing and recording calf growth rates, particularly as the calves are sent out to grazing after weaning, is the best way to identify early any potential health problems.

Even though the calf newsletter is finishing, our assistance for help and advice is always available. If you have any questions or queries, please don't hesitate to contact the clinic, or myself – edunne@cluthavets.co.nz.



I still love seeing so many calves the same age living life happily in the sun. A few more Guernseys in the mix could improve things but, maybe next year!

The Do's and Don'ts of Drenching Calves

Do:

- *Drench calves according to their weight.* There can sometimes be a lot of variation between calf weights within a mob, particularly a mob of mixed breeds. Accurate drenching makes sure the drench actually works and reduces the risk of both resistance and toxicity
- *Weigh your calves* – so you know how heavy they actually are. Looking and taking a guess is not an accurate way to assess calves live weight
- *Give calves oral drenches* – when calves are small and are at a size that oral drenching is possible (not 300kg!), oral drenching can be the most effective means of worm control
- *Use a double combination* – Double combination drenches are the safest for calves. We recommend either Arrest C or Scanda.

Don't

- *Do not drench calves by putting drench in the milk!* It does not mix evenly and results in the irreversible toxicity of some calves and the under drenching of others. Take the time to drench them properly, to get the most out of your money (and not kill your calves!)
- *Don't forget to monitor your calves* and ensure regular drenching programs are put in place. These calves will be in your herd in 2 years time – Keep them healthy and growing!

Calf Weighing

The weighing of calves is really the only measurable and truly accurate way to monitor the growth of calves. 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 get good looking calves that aren't growing!

Clutha Vets are offering a calf weighing service to monitor calf growth from post-weaning to pre-mating. We want to increase awareness of the importance of calf weighing and improve the value of your replacement heifers.

Currently in New Zealand only 81% of heifers raised as calves enter the herd as 2 year olds, and only 55% of heifers identified as replacements at birth survive to start a third lactation. These losses and the implications speak for themselves.

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

Our aim, by monitoring weight gain, is to help you rear heifers that will conceive easily at 15 and 27 months of age, produce well in the first and subsequent lactations and have minimal animal health problems.

Important points for the calves on the ground at the moment:

- Calves weights should be compared to their expected mature weight based on the live weight breeding value, not on a present weight according to the calves breed.
- Calves should not be weaned based on age.
- Calves should only be weaned if they are eating 1-1.5 kg meal per day (refer to previous newsletters about the feeding of meal and rumen development).
- Calves should be at 30% of their expected mature cow weight by the age of 6 months.

Calves and heifers should be weighed every 3 months. This gives us the opportunity to identify when heifers aren't reaching their targets early, so that action can be taken. If you are wanting to weigh calves but don't have the equipment or time, give Clutha Vets a call and our technician team would be happy to be of assistance!

Vaccination of Calves

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

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

With the vaccines available today, calves can be vaccinated earlier 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. Previously, we were concerned about maternal antibodies preventing the vaccines from working properly. This has been shown to be not the case and calves can be vaccinated as young as 4 weeks of age.

As with all vaccines, a booster dose is required 4-6 weeks after the first to provide full protection. The first shot will provide some protection but not enough to provide long term prevention of disease. 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. All stock require an annual booster, if not for all of the above diseases, a bare minimum is vaccination against leptospirosis due to the zoonotic (transmission from animals to people) risk to anyone who is in contact with them.

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.



If you want more information regarding which vaccine is best for your calves, please contact either the Balclutha or Milton clinics to discuss which option best suits you and your situation.