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## Nasty Navels

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While our teams are out checking the navels of every calf that is up for disbudding we have noticed an all too common problem – infections. The navel is the hole in the body wall that the umbilical cord enters through. This contains the blood vessels and other important structures that can act like highway for bacteria if allowed.

Simply spraying the fresh umbilical cord with a 10% iodine spray (spirit based) is often all that is needed to prevent trouble. This should be done daily until the cord is dry.

### Navel Infections

Navel ill is a potentially serious condition that can lead to wide spread infection. After calving, and until the time the navel is dry, the vessels of the umbilicus remain hollow tubes that act as a gateway for bacteria to get straight into the calf's bloodstream. Peritonitis, brain infections, liver abscesses and joint infections can all result. Infection around the navel cord itself causes it to thicken and leads to abscesses.

#### Prevention:

- Pick up calves multiple times/day (to remove them from the source of infection)
- Wash your calf trailer daily (to reduce bacterial load calf is exposed to)
- Ensure the entire navel is doused in a 10% iodine spray (spirit based)
- Continue spraying navels until they have shriveled up and are dry
- Measure your pens, don't over stock your calf pens (1.5m<sup>2</sup> / calf)

#### Look for:

- A swollen, distended navel
- Pus around the navel
- Calves that won't drink or are looking off colour
- Swollen joints
- Strange behavior – circling, shaking, constantly looking up

#### Feel for:

- A thickened cord inside the navel (larger than your pinky finger)
- Hard lumps inside the navel cord
- Heat or pain around the navel



#### Navel Ill Treatment:

At least 5 days of an appropriate antibiotic and a once off anti-inflammatory injection. Call us to discuss.

### Umbilical Hernias

Hernias appear as large, soft, fluid-feeling swellings below the navel. They are caused when the calf's body wall hasn't closed over properly during development. This allows space for abdominal fat and occasionally a loop of intestines to pop out forming a pouch. An umbilical hernia differs from an abscess as the swelling can be pushed back inside the abdomen.

Smaller hernias (less than 3.5cm long) are generally not an issue, and will heal with little intervention. However, larger hernias (over 3.5cm long) can be more of an issue, with the worst case scenario being a trapped section of gut, which if left untreated will cause death. We recommend operating on these calves.

As hernias are inherited as a dominant trait we would recommend that any calves with hernias are not bred from. Identification systems such as 'H' tags are a simple way to identify any cows that have had a hernia at breeding time.

