

Calf Link



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Final Calf Link!

With the end of calving soon upon us and the replacement heifers all on the ground for most, this will be the last weekly Calf Link. But don't worry we will still be keeping in touch about following these calves on to the next stage of rearing through the monthly CUD or dairy newsletters. You can also find previous Calf Link newsletters on the Clutha Vets website (www.cluthavets.co.nz).

This week we will touch on a few topics that are important to calves. The first one being vaccination, both when and what diseases to vaccinate against. The other topic will be calf weighing, which is a measureable way of seeing how well the calves are growing.

The end of the newsletters does not mean the end of asking questions! If you have specific questions you would like answered on any calf rearing topic, please email Elspeth (edunne@cluthavets.co.nz) or alternatively contact the clinic, we are always happy to help!

Just a wee reminder about drenching calves

We discussed last week about drenching calves for internal parasites. There are a few points that we would like to stress.

The basic concept of drenches is that you used a chemical that kills worms without killing the calves. For some particular chemicals, the safety margin between the dose required to control the worms is close to that which could cause harm to the calves if not dosed correctly. Particular drenches to be careful of are ones containing abamectin (or –mectin family) and levamisole. There were a few cases last year where calves died because of incorrect drenching. There is no antidote for these chemicals.

Key things to remember:

- Calves should be off milk



Photo Competition

Entries have now closed for this years Photo Competition. Thank you to those who sent photos in. We will be judging the photos in the coming week and the winner of the *FACE Body and Beauty* Gift Voucher valued up to \$100, will be announced in the next Dairy and Sheep & Beef Newsletters. Thank you to MSD Animal Health for their kind sponsorship. Good Luck!



This tiny little calf is 'Blossom'. Born weighing about 10kg on Friday the 13th! Life's not fair when you have to fight with the lambs for attention!
(R Fegan)



So it's not only dogs that can chew their own tail. No wonder it looked surprised when it bit it!
(R. Bamford)

- Calves need to be on pasture for 3 weeks (it does take time to build up worms)
- Calves must weigh over 100kg (the dosing is only accurate down to this weight)
- Calves should be older than 12weeks
- Use drenches that are appropriate for calves

Calf Weighing

The weighing of calves is really the only measureable 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 preset 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.

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 it poses 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 options.