

Calf-Link

Clutha Vets Newsletter for Calf Rearers



Issue 4, 2017

We have come to the last edition of our Calf-Link for this season. We hope that there aren't too many cows left to calve and that your calves are outside enjoying the spring weather, with plenty of them weaned.

While it has been a bit of a mix of seasons for the calves, hopefully the grass will keep growing and the calves will transition smoothly to a pasture based diet. At this time of year, when farm focus moves onto mating, crops and tractor work, the calves can sometimes be forgotten. Routine drenching and ensuring all vaccinations are done is important to keep the calves growing and healthy with an eye to having them ready for their own mating in just 12 months.

Vaccinating Calves

Don't forget, any questions, concerns or issues - we are always only a phone call away, 24hours a day, 7 days a week!

The vaccination of stock is important to control diseases that are, in most cases, preventable. Think of it as an insurance policy. The diseases that we vaccinate against in young calves include Tetanus, Pulpy kidney, Black disease, Black leg, Malignant oedema (clostridial diseases), BVD and Leptospirosis. Due to the effective vaccination programmes we now have in place, many people know the names of these diseases, but not a lot of people have seen cases of them.

When to Vaccinate?

Early vaccination provides the greatest protection against disease and in the case of lepto prevents the calves becoming carriers. Calves can be vaccinated as young as 4 weeks of age and their 2nd shot (booster) given 4-6 weeks later. However, if calves receive their booster under the age of 3 months, they will require another booster at about 6 months. This provides the best immunity and brings the calves into line with the timing of the whole herd vaccination towards the end of the season.

Which Vaccine?

5-in-1 vaccine covers the main clostridial diseases and can be combined with selenium. 10-in-1 offers protection against 5 strains of clostridial disease. 7-in-1 vaccine provides cover for leptospirosis as well as the clostridial diseases.

Where to Vaccinate?

The site for any vaccination in calves is on the either side of the neck. Vaccines for 5-, 7- or 10-in-1 all go subcutaneously (under the skin). Ensure you are using an appropriate sized needle and that the dose rate is correct.

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- Trace Elements

What's still to do before calves are weaned?

Now is a good time to tidy up any of those things still on the "To do" list for the calves.

Are all calves debudded?

There is often that handful of calves that have been missed for one reason or another and it is best to get them done now before they get too big.

Hernias?

If you had calves identified at debudding as having hernias, now is a good time to check them. Most should have almost resolved, or gotten smaller. Any that are sizeable (3-4 fingers wide or bigger) will need to be surgically corrected.

Navel Infections?

It is also a good time to check up those calves that had navel infections. Some may have become an abscess which will need treatment.

Drenching Calves - the DO's and DON'Ts

Do's:

- DO - weigh your calves so you know how heavy they actually are (or get us to!). Looking and taking a guess is not an accurate way to assess calves' live weight nor are weight tapes. Weighing calves also provides information to use monitoring calves against their growth targets.
- 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.
- DO - use oral drenches. While calves are small and oral drenching is possible and safe, it is the most effective means of worm control.
- DO - use a combination drench. Double or triple combination drenches are the safest for calves. We recommend either Arrest C or Iver Matrix Calf. Single action drenches may not kill every type of worm, and increase the risk of drench resistance developing.

Don'ts

- DON'T - treat calves by putting drench in the milk! It does not mix evenly and can result in under-drenching of some calves and irreversible toxicity (death) of others.
- DON'T - drench calves while they are still in the shed. Calves need to have been out on grass for at least 3 weeks before they will have a high enough worm burden to require drenching. If younger calves are looking scoury, think of other causes (cocci?).
- DON'T - use pour on drenches in calves. Pour-on's are considered to be the least effective way to drench animals. We recommend doing at least 2 oral drenches before moving on to different options.
- 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!

Trace Elements

The three most commonly supplemented trace elements in calves are selenium, copper and cobalt (Vitamin B12). There are many options and combinations for these and a range of other traces. If the calves are drinking mineral-treated water from the dos-a-tron, or getting mineralised oral drench, they probably won't need a lot of extra supplementation before Christmas. However, the only way to be absolutely certain what they need is by testing their status.

Many people find that long- or short-acting B12 injections promote faster growth at this time of year, especially with the transition to grass diet. Copper injection should not be used in calves under 4 months, and should be used with caution in any animal. Bullets are a much safer option for them, but neither should be required until we are well into summer. Selovin LA is very popular and calves do really well on it.

Products like Multimin provide a range of minerals (copper, selenium, manganese and zinc) in one convenient injection. Alltrace boluses are also becoming more and more widely used, some graziers say they can see by eye the farmers who have given their calves these. Alltrace contain copper, cobalt, manganese, selenium, zinc, iodine and Vitamins A,D & E, and probably last for about 8 months. In general, longer acting products give greater reassurance that they will not run short at key times. It's a complicated issue with many factors to consider, please feel free to discuss these with a vet as you are making a plan for your calves.

Caption this photo

A big thank you to those who sent entries in, it was great reading the captions.



Congratulations

The winner of the Chilly Bin and hamper was:

Chris Stirling, Clydevale

Last edition's photo caption winner -

"On it Boss - I will get those birds for you!"

Congratulations to the winner who went into the draw for our fantastic prize.

