

Calf-Link



Issue 2, 2018

Calving is under way for many of you now, and here at Clutha Vets, we are all ready for our busiest season. Calving gear has been dusted off from the depths of our vet trucks and a few early calving calls have been trickling in most days to start the season. There are already some calves on the ground and the rest won't be far away, so this issue will focus on the all-important topic of colostrum! Hopefully all those who attended our Outram Calf Rearing seminar last Friday (a re-run of the Ladies Night we held in Balclutha late June) enjoyed the day and have taken some new knowledge home to put to use this season.

This newsletter, and other calf rearing tips, are available on our "Clutha Calves" FaceBook page. The first 50 people to like the page get a free Clutha Vets beanie (to be collected from one of our stores).

As always, if you have any questions please get in touch with either the Balclutha Clinic (03 4181280) or the Milton Clinic (03 417 8032).



Remember to check out our facebook page -
facebook@cluthavets.co.nz

Key Points with Colostrum

Colostrum is the first milk of a cow that is formed in the weeks leading up to calving. Compared to normal milk it has:

- Immunoglobulins (antibodies)
- 4 times more protein than milk
- More fat than milk
- Higher concentrations of vitamins and minerals

Quantity All calves, replacement or otherwise, must receive at least 10% of their body weight (3-4L), of good quality colostrum in their first 12 hours of life.

Quality The best way to tell good quality colostrum is by measuring its antibody level - this is most easily done using a simple instrument called a Brix refractometer. Readings above 22 indicate excellent colostrum. Brix meters can be purchased from Clutha Vets.

Bacterial contamination will also affect the quality of your colostrum. Attention to hygiene is crucial from the time of collection to the feeding of the calf. Colostrum should be stored in a clean container with a lid.

Quickly A calf's ability to absorb the antibodies from colostrum decreases significantly over time. In the first 6 hours the calf intestine is very "open" and easily absorbs antibodies, however by 24 hrs of life, the calf is unable to absorb these so will be unprotected against challenges from the environment.



Top Tips!

- ◆ Invest in a colostrum warmer so that a calf brought in late can be fed straight away.

Look after your crew, too:

- ◆ Cook a good meal at midday when everyone can sit down together and catchup.
- ◆ Stock up the calf shed with some "pick me ups" like Up n Go's, fruit, muesli bars etc.