

Calf Link



CLUTHA VETS
Animal Health Centre

Balclutha
03 418 1280

Milton
03 417 8032

Calf Rearing Newsletter No. 5 Wednesday 1st October 2014

Short and Sweet!

Firstly, I would like to apologise to you for the lateness of this newsletter. I haven't managed to improve with my time management from last fortnight, so fingers crossed for the next one! Things are quietening down on the calving front, and most people have now got all of their replacement heifers on the ground, some well and truly!

We are now moving onto focusing on transitioning these calves from milk drinkers to ruminants through the development of the rumen. It's also about this time that calves can start getting little lumps and bumps along the jaw line, some of which can develop into quite cheesy abscesses.

Remember, if you have specific questions you would like answered on any calf rearing topic, please email your name and contact details to Elspeth - edunne@cluthavets.co.nz - and we will publish the answers in the next newsletter.

Teething Calves!

We often get asked about lumps or bumps along calves' jaws, often found accidentally but occasionally in calves that might not be looking so good. Just like with children, calves can sometimes get a small swelling as teeth move around and break through. These are usually mild and not seen. Occasionally the tooth roots can become infected and form an abscess. The infections are most commonly seen when calves start eating more straw/hay/meal, as well as other things that they probably shouldn't eat, but is all a part of their learning and inquisitive nature.

Treatment of these calves should include Bovipen at 6mls/calf for at least 4 days and if particularly painful, 1ml of metacam can also be given. Significant abscesses do need to be opened and drained for them to heal.



Developing the Rumen

What is the best rumen development food?

- Straw does not stimulate rumen development because it is too low in energy and protein.
- Calf pellets, although providing protein and energy, are made up of fine particles so do not stay in the rumen long enough.
- **Calf meal is ideal**, especially the muesli types, it has enough protein and provides scratch to get the calves used to chewing and swallowing solid foods.

Are all meal mixes created equal?

The short answer is no, so make sure you read the packet and pay particular attention to the following:

- Protein content should be 20-22%
- Fat should be as low as possible, preferably below 3%
- Metabolisable energy should be around 12 MJME

How long do you feed rumen development food for?

Start early with your calf meal feeding, certainly from one week of age.

- Encouraging the calves to eat the meal can be achieved with a variety of practical tricks including skipping a feed or mixing the meal with a little milk powder.
- Having a small amount of meal constantly available will allow the calves to slowly get used to eating it.
- No calf should be weaned until it is eating one to one and a half kilograms of meal.
- Regardless of your system the meal should be fed for a minimum of 2-3 weeks after weaning.