

Veterinary Newsletter

January 2012

Be aware of Cryptosporidia this Spring!

Cryptosporidium parvum is a parasite associated with intensive farming and high stocking rates. Calves are infected after birth and usually show signs of weakness, dehydration and scour by one week old. Treatment of sick calves can be unsuccessful.

There is one product available on the market that helps both prevent and treat diarrhoea associated with cryptosporidiosis, Halocur (Halofuginone lactate). In order to commence a preventative programme it is essential to get an accurate diagnosis when a calf scour problem starts. Test kits are available at the surgery which diagnose the presence of rotavirus, coronavirus, E. coli and cryptosporidia in a scour sample in 10 minutes. These rapid results aid vets and farmers to control and prevent scour outbreaks much faster than previously. Ask at the surgery for a test to be carried out as soon as a problem is seen.

PREVENTION OF CALF SCOUR

Colostrum intake is the key to preventing calf scour. Calves should receive three litres in the first six hours. Use of a teat and sucking is best as it puts milk into the correct stomach. Otherwise use a stomach tube. Don't rely on the calf sucking the cow, they usually don't suck enough colostrum. Good hygiene in calf accommodation is vital. Regular cleaning and use of a disinfectant such as Kilcox extra is very important.

Vaccines such as Bovivac S and Rotavac Corona can be used to increase immunity against other pathogens which cause calf scour. These can be given to the cow between one and three months before calving. This is a **MUST** in suckler herds and for the last half of the calving season in dairy herds.

Pasteurellosis Warning.

Pasteurellosis in sheep can cause acute, often fatal pneumonia or systemic pasteurellosis which results in a sudden death syndrome. Both conditions can affect sheep and lambs of all ages and outbreaks of the disease are common. Signs of disease include discharge from eyes & nostrils, inappetance, fever, cough but more commonly sudden death.

Pasteurella is found in all healthy sheep and when sheep become stressed disease is seen. Common stressors are transport, handling, parasite burden, lambing & other infections. Vaccinate ewes with Heptavac P Plus to protect against the disease and give a booster dose before lambing to protect her lamb via the colostrum. Lambs should be vaccinated with two doses given 4-6 weeks apart from three weeks old to minimise losses after this time.

Clostridial Disease In Sheep

Clostridial disease is present on every farm and is a constant threat throughout the year. Pulpy kidney, Braxy, black disease and tetanus are quite commonly diagnosed as the cause of sudden death in sheep. Treatment is rarely successful. Prevention is through vaccination. Flock owners should vaccinate all sheep against this disease and administer a booster dose 4-6 weeks before lambing to protect the newborn lambs in the first weeks of life. Several clostridial vaccines are available. Clostridia and pasteurella protection can also be obtained from a single product. Ask any of our vets for advice on planning an appropriate vaccination policy for your flock.

Store all Vaccines Between 2 & 8°C
Ensure They Do Not Freeze In Winter.

CALF HEALTH

Due to the prevailing weather conditions over the past few months' calf pneumonia has been an issue on many farms. As the calving season progresses calf scour can also become more difficult to control due to the build up of disease in the calving pens and the rearing shed.

Essential management practices to minimise the impact of pneumonia and scour during the first months of life include:

1. Clean and disinfect the calving pens regularly.
2. Feeding at least three litres of good quality colostrum within the first six hours of life.
3. Removing dairy bred calves from their mother shortly after birth (but ensure adequate colostrum intake occurs).
4. Clean dry bedding, and well-ventilated well-drained housing, to help avoid chilling of calves due to extremes of temperature particularly in damp conditions.
5. Batch rearing of calves, adopting a strict all-in, all-out policy with cleansing and disinfection between batches.
6. Prompt treatment of any sick animals in consultation with your veterinary surgeon
 - a. Calf scour- Oral fluids regularly in the early stages along with medication if necessary to control cryptosporidia or bacterial pathogens. If calves are unable to stand or have severely sunken eyes then intravenous fluids will be necessary.
 - b. Calf pneumonia- Use of a long acting antimicrobial which is licensed to treat the common bacteria associated with pneumonia including *Mycoplasma bovis* which was the second most common type of bacterial pneumonia isolated from post mortem samples in Northern Ireland last winter. If multiple cases occur, it may be prudent to treat the batch to get on top of the outbreak quickly.
7. **Vaccination**
 - a. Calf scour- vaccinate the cow pre-calving.

- b. Calf pneumonia- vaccinate all susceptible stock in advance of expected challenge depending on the likely pathogens involved and where possible avoid housing animals which have recovered from pneumonia with susceptible animals.

Where severe problems with scour or pneumonia occur, farmers are advised to seek veterinary advice early in the outbreak to help ensure the long term impact on herd performance is minimal.

SYNCHRONISATION FOR DAIRY HEIFERS

Batch calving of heifers is a big benefit for the modern dairy farmer.

Heifers can be calved over a short period of time allowing them to be calved before the main herd and helps keep heifers calving at the target age which saves money.

Nutrition can be managed much more easily as regards transition diets and body condition can be more easily controlled.

The biggest **advantage** is that **one straw** of high quality AI semen can be used to get two heifers in calf, improving your genetic potential.

Sexed semen can also be used to increase the number of females produced.

A number of methods can be used to batch calve heifers.

CIDRS or PRIDS can be used in combination with prostaglandin and gives good conception rates.

Examination before treatment allows us to pick up unsuitable animals, pregnant heifers and freemartins.

BVD & LEPTO VACCINE REMINDER

For many of our dairy farmers this is the start of the breeding season.

Ensure that your BVD and Lepto vaccination regimes are up to date to help maximise your fertility rates.

Vaccinate maiden heifers with two shots of BVD vaccine before service, this will increase conception rates and prevent the birth of BVD infected calves.