



Advances in Calf Scour prevention

- SEPTEMBER 25

As I write this, we are again in a heat wave with a number of days over 30 degrees and no rain forecast. Not only does this result in a challenge for winter forage but also causes heat stress in cows and we shouldn't forget the calves either. Hot weather can exacerbate dehydration in calves quickly and we should remember this is the biggest killer in calves under 2w.

Numbers of calves showing scour are generally worse through the winter as their energy demands are higher. Also, due to the damp conditions scour bugs can more easily pass from pen to pen. However, if an outbreak hits through the summer often mortality rates can be higher, worsened by dehydration due to the heat.

Summer should be a good time to try and get a "deep clean" of the calf shed using the UV sunlight and quicker drying times. During this time ideally the whole shed should be emptied and deep cleaned for 2w. If this is not possible, doing a pen at a time is an option. Also ensure that the disinfectant that you are using is compliant with your milk contract but is also active against crypto and cocci and that you rest pens for 14d to get best results.

Making resilient calves

Rota virus and Crypto are the two most common bugs we test for in calf scour samples. Rota virus is a virus that is present on all farms and is strongly linked to colostrum management. Crypto is a single-celled parasite that can also infect people, so please wash your hands and be careful. Crypto is now present on many farms and managing it is strongly linked to hygiene of calf pens, group size and time in the calving pen. When these two bugs act together this can be disastrous on calf health and welfare as well as economics.

Making your calves more resilient against these as well as other bugs is key. Ensuring that they have adequate space and a good level of straw is key. I aim for 3m² space per calf, however 2.5m² is often adequate, below that disease management will always be a struggle. Straw is going to be limited this year, however, ensuring that there is a layer between the calves and the other faeces in the pen is massively important when preventing outbreaks as all scour bugs are transferred from faeces to the calves' mouth.



Ensuring the calves have good nutrition is also important. This can be a real challenge when it comes to scours as often these calves don't want to drink high volumes. Calves at around one week of age should still be able to digest 3L twice a day of a good quality powder or safe transition milk. This will give them the energy to fight the bugs as well as trying to create their own immunity. Limiting calves at the vital age can make scours worse.

Prevention tools we can use

Rota virus has traditionally been managed by vaccinating the dry cows, then the extra antibodies coming through in the colostrum. This seems to work really well on both dairy and beef farms but relies on good colostrum management.

Crypto can be managed in a number of ways, often including medications such as "Halocur". This medication helps by lowering the levels of the parasites that are excreted in the faeces so it can be used as a treatment or preventative. Halocur can be toxic, so care needs to be taken to dose accurately, to ensure that calves have recently drank milk (to provide a lining to the stomach) and also be well hydrated. If calves are scouring and therefore dehydrated, we suggest skipping a day.

Relatively new to the market is a crypto vaccine that is again given to the dry cows and the antibodies come through the colostrum to the calf. For the best results calves need to receive colostrum or transition milk for 5 days and cows need two doses the first year, then once a year following.

Colostrum – liquid gold



Colostrum is vital to control and stop any scour outbreak. Calves are born without any immunity so they need to get their antibodies from colostrum. However, it is also a great source of easily digestible fats to give the calf energy, also plenty of pre and post biotics to help form a good gut biome. It is important to ensure that the colostrum is clean and so has low levels of bacteria- as well as ensuring we are not transferring diseases such as Jonhes, TB, Salmonella, Q fever and mycoplasma to name a few.

Extended transition milk feeding or extended colostrum feeding are being talked about more often. This is a way of feeding more of those antibodies and good fats to your calves; however, doing it in a safe way on farm can have its challenges. There are a few solutions that seem to work well. This can be done on smaller farms where individual cows can be collected from and given to specific calves. Often milk is collected from the calf's mum for the first 5 days before moving onto powdered milk. Another option is that the full amount of colostrum harvested from first and second milking is kept and given over the first 5 days. Day one 4L and 2L then 1L a day so a total of 10L of 22% brix colostrum over the 5 days. Stored colostrum needs to be kept clean which can be achieved through use of a fridge or preservatives.

More people are moving to using pasteurizers. These can be individual colostrum bag pasteurizers such as Colo quick or batch pasteurizers that can be part of a trolley or stand alone. Still high-risk johnes or TB cows should not enter this pool. For the Colo quick system this means every calf requires two bags of colostrum- the first feed ASAP and the next split over the next 4d.

For batch pasteurizers this means that once a day there is a pooled but pasteurized amount of transition milk that can either be fed to the calves as their only source of nutrition or mixed with powdered milk, ie 1L of pasteurized transition milk and 2L of powder milk per feed.

As ever please speak to your vet who understands the particular challenges on your farm, or I can come out and offer a specific calf visit and focus on these areas.

Thanks
Kat



OTHER NEWS....

VET TECH UPDATE...

A warm welcome to Beatrice Molyneux who joins our team, she looks forward to meeting you all soon



Also joining us are new grad vets:

Sophie Hicks

and

Megan McCrory
(from 16th September)



I'm sure you will join us in welcoming them to the practice

COMPASSION RESPECT INTEGRITY SUSTAINABILITY PROGRESSION CARE

T: 01666 823035 Option "1" for visits or enquiries, "2" for medicines, "3" for TB testing

Meetings coming up ...

MEDICINE HANDLING COURSE



**@ The Practice on
Thursday 11th September
11am to 12.30pm
(Non specific species)**

**** Autumn 2025 Course Programme ****

AHPA Approved AI course: £550 + Vat:

- Wednesday 8th - Friday 10th October, location TBC
- Wednesday 5th - Friday 7th November, location TBC

Foot Trimming courses:

- Lantra Approved CHCSB BCVA First Aid for Feet: Wednesday 15th October at Ack Ack Farm Yard, Old Sodbury, BS37 6RR. £300 + Vat
- Lantra Approved CHCSB BCVA 3 Day Intermediate Foot Trimming: Please register interest and courses will be run based on demand. £800 + Vat

Short Courses: £77.50 + Vat

- **Assessment and care of the sick cow, including down cow management:** Wednesday 1st October 1pm-4pm, at Whitelands Farm, Kington Langley, SN15 5PD
- **Calving the Cow:** Tuesday 30th September, 2pm-4pm, at the George Veterinary Group, Malmesbury, SN16 9AU
- **Youngstock Care and Management:** Wednesday 15th October, 1pm-5pm at Laddenside Farm, Iron Acton, BS37 9TG

REMEMBER

**You can now
contact us via**

**or Call us on 01666 823035
Ext. 1**

- Chat
- Send photos
- Send video
- Send voicenotes



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