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Newsletter April 2017

Care of the newborn calf: Part 2

Last month we highlighted the importance of colostrum. **Remember your calves need sufficient quantity and quality of colostrum within their first 6 hours of life.** To maximise the health of your calves and help prevent the impact of disease there are still a few things you'll need to consider.

You may need to review your current vaccination protocols: depending on the prevalence of diseases you may need to consider vaccinating your calves after the maternal antibody levels from the colostrum have diminished. Pneumonia control is a good example of how vaccines can be used to boost a calf's immune defence.

Is your shed up to the job? As well as cleanliness there are three main factors we need to consider; temperature, moisture and air quality. Calves have a thermal neutral zone of 10- 26° C, below this temperature they'll use energy to keep warm instead of using that energy to grow.



The physiological stress of being cold will also suppress the calves immune system making them more susceptible to infection. A combination of deep straw beds, calf coats and draft prevention (whilst maintaining good ventilation) should help keep your calves warm.

Excessive moisture in the environment encourages the survival, growth and spread of bugs, as well as increasing the lower critical temperature. **Moisture levels can be decreased by using deep straw bedding and sloping floors to facilitate drainage.** Ensuring there is a good supply of fresh air will also reduce the spread of pathogens. If you are at all unsure you may want to consider testing your ventilation with a smoke bomb. **A good way of ensuring adequate air changes, whilst preventing draughts, is to use positive pressure ventilation.** The most cost effective way of achieving this is a continuous fan with tube delivery. Recently published data demonstrates a 50-75% reduction in pneumonia on farms which have installed this system.



Vaccinate for Blackleg now and protect your stock this grazing season

Blackleg is a clostridial disease which causes sudden death in cattle and sheep. FarmVets SouthWest can help you avoid this with cost effective Blackleg vaccines. Order yours today.



Know your enemy...

As well as FVSW veterinary advice and worm egg counts, make the most of the free information offered by the NADIS parasite forecast and SCOPS to help predict the prevalence of parasitic disease and manage your current worm protocols.

Ignoring Johne's, a costly mistake

Johne's disease is a chronic, debilitating and irreversible gut infection of adult cattle caused by *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies *paratuberculosis* (MAP). Whilst often less than 5% will show clinical signs; Johne's positive individuals will have poorer milk yields, higher mastitis rates, reduced fertility rates and a higher lameness risk. Clinically affected animals will scour and waste away until the animal dies, or is culled. **Johne's is a disease that can carry a considerable economic loss to your farm - ignoring it simply isn't an option!**



In order to control the disease it is important to understand how Johne's is transmitted so we can identify areas in which control is important. **Faecal transmission is by far the biggest and most important route of transmission.** Infected cattle shed MAP into the environment, contaminating calving pens, communal areas and potentially feed and water. Nonetheless, other routes of transmission such as milk/colostrum, in utero and even via natural service should also be considered when creating a control protocol.

The majority (>80%) of cattle become infected as young calves, particularly within the first 24 hours of life. As a direct result, areas of Johne's control will primarily centre on the calving period. Schemes such as NMR Herdwise will help you identify high risk animals with the use of a traffic light based system of risk classification that allocate animals to one of three groups;

1. **Green** - Low risk cows to be managed as normal.
2. **Amber** - Infected and likely to be in the subclinical phase of the disease. Manage as a risk.
3. **Red** - High risk animals that will be shedding large quantities of MAP. Manage as a risk or cull



If Johne's is present on farm you may want to consider discussing your current control protocols with us so we can help you **limit the impact of this disease on your herd.** Many of the FVSW vets are BCVA Johne's Accredited so we are perfectly placed to help you manage this often confusing disease.

Is your Bull Fit for Purpose?

Whilst we have run similar articles in the past, there is still one question that is often overlooked when discussing your herd's conception rate - **just how fertile is your bull?**

It is thought that up to 30% of stock bulls are sub-fertile which can be a much greater issue than complete infertility as it often goes unnoticed. Sub-fertile bulls will continue to get just enough cows in calf to avoid suspicion and often redirect blame towards the cows. The consequences can be costly, resulting in **poor conception rates and extended calving intervals.**



As we approach turnout **now is the time to start considering a breeding soundness exam (BSE).** A BSE includes a general physical exam, as well as semen evaluation, to evaluate your bull's fertility.

Where possible, new bulls should be tested prior to purchase to ensure they are fit for purpose. Existing bulls should be tested annually; just because your bull has been effective for 5 years doesn't mean he'll still be up to the job.



Easter and Bank Holiday Office Opening Hours

Our offices will be shut on Good Friday, Easter Monday, Monday, May 1st and Monday, May 29th
Drugs can be collected from our Sedgemoor Office **by appointment only.**

