

**Newsletter November 2019**

**Pneumonia in calves**

Pneumonia in calves has a devastating effect on welfare and future productivity of livestock. It is a multifactorial disease, therefore there are many strategies we can use to combat it, detailed below are the main factors that can lead to pneumonia and how you can avoid them on your farm

**Pathogen**

Pneumonia is generally initiated by a virus (PI3, RSV, BVD or IBR) which can all be vaccinated for from as young as 2 weeks. The only exception is the Mycoplasma bacteria which can cause primary pneumonia.

Secondary pneumonia is caused by multiple bacteria including Pasteurella. Treatment should include the use of Metacam and an antibiotic – a protocol should be in place with your vet for antibiotic usage.

**Environment**

Temperature, ventilation, humidity and stocking density are all factors that can leave a calf susceptible to pneumonia. Calves need dry bedding, to be out of drafts and to be in an environment above 12°C – below this “critical temperature” the calf will use energy to keep itself warm, so will need more milk.

These can all be controlled by subtle changes to housing such as using bales to create shelter and block drafts or calf jackets to keep them warm.

Ventilation is still important but must be above head height as to circulate air, but not to create drafts. There are many creative ways to aid in creating a suitable environment for your calves.

Overstocked pens are also a risk for pneumonia.

**Host**

Good colostrum management is essential for setting up the calf with a good immune system. Early detection of calves with pneumonia is vital. Often pneumonia can be detected before severe coughing occurs by taking temperatures and by monitoring breathing rates and effort.

Giving Metacam during the early viral phase of pneumonia can prevent subsequent antibiotic usage and vet visits.

Stress is an important issue in that it can lower a calf’s immune system. Be wary post-weaning and after castrating/disbudding, these calves will need TLC as well as suitable pain relief to help negate the stress effect.

Fast recognition of cases is essential, this can be done through regular temperature monitoring of calves (shouldn't be above 39.3°C) as well as checking respiratory rates and efforts (should be under 30 breaths per minute and not look laboured). Calves seen to have pneumonia should be isolated if possible, so that they are not sharing the same air space as healthy calves.

## On Our Rounds.....

With colder, wetter weather approaching, attention turns to housing on cattle farms. Suckler herds should be thinking about housing treatments to cover **Liver fluke** and **worms** if necessary. Remember to leave a few weeks between housing and the treatments for fluke as no single product will kill all stages of immature fluke. Triclabendazole products like **Endofluke** will treat down to 2 week old immatures and so should be used a fortnight after housing to ensure the best chance of a complete kill. If using a product which only kills older immatures (**Trodax** or **Ivomec Super**) it is best to leave 6 weeks before treatment. They could however, be used straight away if you are planning on repeating the treatment after Christmas, or at least sampling for evidence of infection at that point. This is especially useful if you suspect the fluke burden is already affecting animals and so want to kill off the adults.



Calf rearers and dairy farms should be finding their calf jackets and thinking of winter vaccinations. **Bovipast RSP** or **Rispoval Intranasal** are popular choices and should be considered as an aid to pneumonia control. Remember energy requirements go up in the winter so more volume of milk powder should be offered. Introducing concentrate feeding by the end of week 1 will help with energy intakes of these vulnerable calves. The earlier we start with concentrate feeding the better chance the calf has of

consuming the target concentrate intake of at least 1kg by weaning.

Remember we regularly run **Medicines courses** to fulfil Red Tractor requirements as well as **Milksure, Foot Trimming and DIY-AI courses**. Contact the office to register your interest.

## Medicines Course



As you are all aware, new regulations and recommendations have come into place in the last year relating to medicines usage on farm from both Red Tractor and Milk Buyers. This has involved changes to, and efforts to reduce, antibiotic usage. There have also been stipulations that farm workers need to have attended a relevant training course in the administration of medicines.



In our continuing efforts to support our farmers we will be holding a **Medicines Course at 2 pm on Wednesday, 5th December** at Sedgemoor Auction Centre.

The course will cover all material relevant to these recommendations/regulations.

**The course costs £40 per farm.**

Please contact any of our offices to book your place.



## Your local farm veterinary service

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