



FarmVets

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REDUCING THE RISK OF MILK FEVER

Clinical milk fever (wobbly or down cows) is thought to affect between 4-9% of the UK's dairy cows, sub-clinical milk fever (reduced feed intake) goes unnoticed but affects far more cows and can increase the incidence of post-calving disease (e.g. mastitis and ketosis).

Calcium requirement

An extra 80g of calcium is needed by the milking cow compared to the dry cow and this has to come from the diet since the cow has only a small amount of calcium in reserve. This sudden change in demand, and how well the cow copes with it, is responsible for the occurrence of milk fever.

A key driver for milk fever is the amount of potash and sodium in the transition cow diet. Sodium and potash tends to make the cow "calcium lazy" so she responds poorly to the sudden demand for calcium around calving. Potash tends to be high in grass and grass silage from fields that have a history of heavy slurry application.



We generally advise that transition cows don't go near high potash grass or grass silage. Old permanent pastures with lots of invader grass species (e.g. timothy and meadow fescue) tend to have lower potash. Dry cows don't need rocket fuel first cut silage so at least use later cuts/big bale silage. Magnesium chloride in the water or mixed in with the feed also helps to combat milk fever. The "chloride" part is more important than the extra magnesium (dry cows aren't often low in magnesium) because it wakes the cow's calcium system, making her better able to cope with the change in demand for calcium.

Treatment for Milk Fever

Despite your best efforts, the odd cow may well go down with milk fever (e.g. fat cows or old cows with a history of milk fever). These cows can be selected for a preventative calcium treatment which we currently stock called "Bovikalc". Bovikalc is an oral calcium bolus that can be given at calving to help reduce the development of milk fever. It is also very good as a treatment for milk fever; a bolus can be given with, or 2-3 hours after, intra-venous calcium is given. Giving bottle after bottle of calcium under the skin can reduce how well the cow reacts to milk fever and can make the situation worse rather than better.

A note of warning - over use of calcium bolus supplements can lead to relapses of milk fever in the same way that using too many bottles of calcium can, even though the risk is not so great. A maximum of two boluses should be used without veterinary advice.

Moorshard Herd Visit 2014 Holstein Celebration

Congratulations to Randolph and Brian Miller on their successful Open Day on 11th June as part of the four day Holstein Celebration in the South West. A good turnout of breeders came from all over the country to view the Holsteins at the farm, a number of which were sold at auction at Sedgemoor Market the following day.



Congratulations.....



To Maureen Trott, of Church Farm on winning the Farm Woman of the Year award at this year's Bath & West show. The award was launched to celebrate the often unseen, behind the scenes contribution of women in the industry and the communities built around it..... well done from all of us at FarmVets

Bovikalc Offer



Following on from the article on milk fever we are currently offering a deal on Bovikalc - buy 6 boxes and get one box FREE

Cows on holiday

After every successful lactation we always allow our busy high yielding cows some time off - which is well deserved and very useful. The dry period, because that is, of course, what we are talking about, is a time for the udder to recover from lactation and prepare for a new one. It is also a time



to eliminate any infections that might have developed when the cows were milking. Dry cows on holiday are quite often out of sight so it is easy to forget to check if they actually do eliminate their infections. We always advise that you monitor the effectiveness of your dry period. The best way to do this is by looking at cell counts before drying off and after coming back in to milk again. This way you can see if old infections were cured and if there aren't any new infections arising from the dry period. Assessing the holiday period like this can help you to make changes to your dry cow strategies and treatments where necessary. Data can be easily assessed from milk recording and/or Interherd. Please contact your vet if you have any questions!