



An Update on Calf Scour

Calving is now well underway in most of our Spring calving herds. But the birth of a live calf is only the first stage. The next aim is to rear that animal to MAKE money rather than lose money. And as usual, the new arrivals bring with them the same old problems...

Average calf mortality between birth and 3 months has been shown to be around **3-6%** in several large studies. *What is yours? Would you like to be better than average?* [Some herds were able to achieve almost **NO** calf losses in this period, so it is possible!] 40-60% of calf deaths in this period are due to **diarrhoea** and it has been estimated that **EACH** case of diarrhoea can cost more than £40 (+ labour).

And don't forget that **EVERY** calf that has had diarrhoea WILL require **MORE food** to reach a set weight and **LONGER** to get there. Put another way, a 100-cow suckler herd where the calves have diarrhoea can be losing **£33** per animal AT RISK.

Do you think you could significantly reduce your calf diarrhoea for less than £3300/year?

Causes

It is generally accepted that most infectious calf scour is caused by **more than one** organism. The most common criminals are Rotavirus, Cryptosporidia, Coccidia, Coronavirus, E. coli K99 and Salmonella (in approximately that order). Also remember that scour may be non-infectious in origin. The common causes are problems with the amount, timing, method and type of feed.

The multiple causes of scour illustrate 2 main needs:

1. Accurate diagnosis of the cause(s) of calf scour in **YOUR** herd
2. A global approach to **prevention** and **treatment**



Reduce the challenge to the calf and increase the calf's resistance

Aids to diagnosis

- **On-farm scour kits** – we are currently trialling the use of kits which test for Rotavirus, Coronavirus, Cryptosporidium and E. coli in the hope of obtaining a more rapid diagnosis.
- **VLA sample submission** – for a more comprehensive profile we send faeces collected directly from 5+ freshly-scouring calves that have received no treatment (15g/calf).
- **Transfer of immunity tests** – blood from 2-7 day-old calves can be sent to the VLA to assess whether they have received adequate colostrum
- **Colostrometer** – a simple on-farm test can assess the quality of a freshly-calved cow's colostrum.

Prevention is better than cure

- **Colostrum** - it is impossible to over-emphasise the importance of a calf receiving **adequate colostrum** at the **right time**.
"Six pints in six hours" **AT LEAST**.
 - * If just left to suckle, >50% of dairy calves won't get enough.
 - * It is a waste of time & money vaccinating your cows if the calves don't get the colostrum.
 - * Good dry cow management promotes good colostrum production.
 - * Calf scour pastes may contain only as many antibodies as 60ml of colostrum. *Are you spending your time & money wisely?*
- **Reduce challenge**
 - * **Navel dipping** at birth.
 - * **Cleaning AND disinfecting** calving pens between births and housing between groups. Wet bedding increases scour risk.
- **Correct feeding**
 - * If artificially rearing, have a hygienic and regular feeding routine. Ensure calves receive enough (approx. 10% of bodyweight/day)
 - * Provide freely available water & roughage (to promote rumen development). Offer controlled amounts of concentrates (18% CP) from 1-2 weeks.
- **Minimise stress** with adequate housing/shelter, and by avoiding/minimising environmental or managerial stressors.
- **Vaccination** – of cows with Rotavec Corona. Useful when a diagnosis of Rotavirus &/or Coronavirus &/or E. coli K99 has been made.

LARKMEAD STAFF CHANGES

Kirsty is off to pastures new, having worked at Larkmead for almost 15 years! Kirsty started as our part-time receptionist at Benson and gradually worked her way up the ladder to fill the position of office manager in our Large Animal Office.

Many of you will know Kirsty well and we are sure you would like to join us in wishing her every success in her new career.



David joined the Large Animal Office team in March. David has made a big move from the Lake District to Wallingford and is settling into the area well.

David is already proving to be a valuable asset to Larkmead and is learning the ropes very quickly. He has not worked in a Veterinary Surgery before, so please bear with him whilst he learns the lingo!



PORTMAN BURTLEY FARM WALK



Thank you to everyone who attended our Herd Health Planning meeting at Portman Burtley Estates on 3rd April. The meeting highlighted the need for proactive health planning and the advances that can be made when preventative medicine is put into place.

If you would like to work towards the achievements made at Portman Burtley, then please call us to organise a farm profile.

Congratulations to Mrs Mearns and Paul Thomas for correctly guessing the weight of the bull.

Thank you again to Andrew and Tim for hosting an excellent meeting.



UPCOMING MEETINGS:



We are holding a **Game Bird Meeting** at Larkmead on **Wednesday 23rd April** on the subject of **coccidiosis** (including treatment and preventative disinfection of equipment) presented by Gavin Kelly from Bayer.
Refreshments at 7pm and the talk starts around 8pm.
Please phone the office if you would like more information.

19th April — National Cattle Mobility Event meeting on lameness in cattle at Harper Adams University College, Shropshire. From 9.30am to 4.00 pm. Tickets cost £20 and can be booked by calling 07960 073052.

NFU meetings on Blue Tongue **21st April** at Eynsham and **28th April** at Newbury — please phone the farm animal office for more information.