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FARM NEWSLETTER

CATTLE

AUTUMN CALVING

Autumn calving is now in full swing. Many of you will already know just how essential it is for a newborn calf (or any animal!) to receive colostrum within the first 24 hours of life. Ideally, the intake of colostrums should be within 6 hours. It's the antibodies within this colostrum that provide a newborn with an immune system.

The quality of a cow's colostrums varies due to:

- Age of the cow - heifer colostrum contains fewer antibodies due to the heifers themselves having been exposed to fewer diseases;
- Breed of the cow - Jersey colostrum has higher antibody levels than Holstein colostrums;
- A short dry cow period affects colostrum quality;
- High yielding cows have poorer colostrum;

- Poor hygiene – if the colostrum contains a high level of bacteria then this affects the uptake of antibodies in the calf's gut.

Ideally calves should receive 3 litres of colostrum within the first 6 hours of life, split into 2 separate feeds. This equates to two sessions of 20 minutes of continuous sucking by the calf.

A calf's intestine is very permeable in the first 24 hours of life, meaning that the antibodies travel across the gut wall into the bloodstream. These 'holes' in the gut close up once the calf is a day old. A stressed calf (perhaps after a hard calving) has a reduced uptake of antibodies.

A calf receiving insufficient colostrum will present with illnesses such as Navel ill and Secondary Joint ill, diarrhoea (often caused by e.coli), and Pneumonia. The problem may be due to poor colostrum quality or insufficient intake.

We now have a colostrometer in the practice. All you need to do is drop off samples of colostrum and we can measure the quality. Vetquinol are currently running a promotion so if you fill in a form when dropping off your sample then expect a fleece jacket in return!! An alternative is to buy your own colostrometer. This simple device scores the colostrum's quality on a green, amber and red scale. Any 'green' colostrum can then be kept for other calves. Though please beware of the potential spread of Johnes when pooling colostrum. Also, when defrosting frozen samples please do this

naturally as a microwave only serves to kill the essential antibodies!

A colostrometer costs £44 so if you'd like one, then please let the girls on Large Animal Reception know.

If calves are performing poorly then we can measure the antibody status of a calf's blood to confirm if uptake has been sufficient.

Locatim is a new product that contains sufficient antibodies for a calf within a 60ml bottle. Simply administer the bottle as soon as the calf is born. This is particularly useful for calves born to heifers, calves born after a big pull/caesarean, particularly valuable calves and those born at 2am who you don't want to watch all night hoping they'll suck! Locatim sells at £21 a bottle. A calf will still need some milk though to provide it with energy.

CRYPTOSPORIDIUM

I am often presented cases of calves under 2 weeks of age with diarrhoea which the farmer says is non-responsive to antibiotics. One possible cause of this is Cryptosporidium. This is a protozoa that the calf ingests from the environment. Older calves are immune to the effects and so act as carriers. Neonatal calves are susceptible to the effects and present with white diarrhoea, depression and weight loss, with secondary infections such as pneumonia common.

Take a faecal sample to your vet for diagnosis as there is a specific treatment needed for

Cryptosporidium. Antibiotics can be given in case of other infections and rehydration may be needed. In terms of control, only batch calves with the same age group if not alone, avoid faecal contamination of food sources, regularly put down clean bedding and adopt an 'all in - all out' movement policy. Only ammonia based disinfectants will kill the Cryptosporidium.

CLEANSING

We currently recommend that every cow be jabbed with **Reprocline** as soon as they calve. The Reprocline helps the cow to cleanse - meaning fewer cases of retained cleansings which can often prove costly due to the antibiotic therapy needed and secondary problems to Metritis such as ketosis and displaced abomasums. There will also be a delay until first service and reduced conception rates. Cows that have had large calves, twins, a twisted uterus, or have subclinical milk fever are prone to not cleansing.

STREP. UBERIS

We recently had a successful farm meeting on the problem posed by *Strep. uberis* on dairy farms. This has always been seen as an environmental mastitis pathogen as straw yards provide a great breeding ground for the bacteria. *Strep. uberis* is now also seen as a contagious pathogen which can be spread in the parlour and persist in the udder of the cow. **Mamyzin** provides antibiotic cure and **Metacam** helps to reduce the inflammation in the udder thus reducing the somatic cell count.

If you are unsure as to the bacterial cause of a mastitis

problem then please take a sample, and if you can't drop the sample into us that day, freeze it. Take a sample before any antibiotic treatment is given. Then drop all the samples off, remembering to write the cow's number, the quarter infected, and duration of mastitis on the side of the milk pot. Boehringer are currently paying for any milk cultures being done so that is an extra incentive for you!

CATTLE & SHEEP

WORMING

At this time of year all cattle should wormed at housing. If you have any doubts then we can do in-house faecal egg counts to see if worming is needed. Please drop in a couple of small fresh samples for us to test. All milking cows need to be wormed with **Eprinex** as this has no milk withdrawal. **Cydetin Pour-on** now has a 6 day milk withdrawal so can be used on cows close to calving/on antibiotic therapy.

Please be aware that all cattle and sheep need fluking now. **Closantel 4-in-1** will worm and fluke your animals all in one go. The life cycle of fluke is only 6 weeks so sheep out to grass may need doing once every 2 months throughout the winter. We suggest that all dairy herds do a bulk milk test at this time of year to check for liver fluke which may not present with clinical signs, but can reduce milk yield. Cows can only be treated for fluke at drying off with **Closamectin** or **Trodax**.

The dairy farmers amongst you may have sporadic problems with Mycotoxins. These are produced by fungi found in feeds

and can cause cows to 'go off' their food leading to problems such as ketosis and displaced abomasums. Alltech Ruminant Division Team are now offering a comprehensive analysis of feedstuff suspected of being infected. They will identify the Mycotoxin contamination and quantify it. This test will cost £150.00, although this is less than the cost of a displaced abomasum!! Please let Jim know if you have a suspected problem.

LAMBING LISTS

With winter almost upon us, so is lambing time! An up to date lambing list is now on our website www.hooknortonvets.co.uk.

FARM MEETING

Our next farm meeting - for our smallholders and those wishing to gain some basic knowledge into the everyday needs of livestock - is on the **16th November at 7.30pm at the Horse & Groom, Milcombe**, about: vaccinations needed, worming schedules, some common ailments and basic first aid in case of an emergency.