

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2016

Impact of Pneumonia on Dairy Calves

- 15% of dairy heifer calves born alive don't make it as far as first calving
- Pneumonias are the biggest cause of mortality in calves
- For every calf treated for pneumonia at least as many other in contact calves develop lung damage which results in reduced weight gains, increasing age at calving and reducing subsequent milk production
- October and November are often the highest risk months for calves to develop pneumonia
- Whether a calf develops respiratory disease or not is dependent on if the immunity that it acquires through receiving colostrum, protection provided by pneumonia vaccination and its own general health is sufficient to cope with the size of challenge of the respiratory infection it is confronted with.

Colostrum

Inadequate intakes of colostrum will result in higher disease and death rates in pre-weaned calves and reduced weight gain. To avoid this and ensure that all calves receive sufficient colostrum, there should be a management plan based on the 3 'Q' s.

- 1) **Quality**—Colostrum with a high concentration of antibodies and low bacterial numbers
- 2) **Quantity**—Sufficient volume of colostrum should be fed to ensure a good level of antibodies. Aim for 10% of the calf bodyweight of colostrum to be fed in the first 12 hours (i.e. a 40kg calf needs 4 litres of which 2-3 litres should be in the first 6 hours).
- 3) **Quickly**—Colostrum must be fed whilst the gut can still absorb antibodies.

Vaccination

Traditionally dairy calves have either been vaccinated with a single dose of **Rispoval Intranasal** (up the nose) from 9 days of age giving protection against RSV and PI3 viruses or with 2 doses of **Bovipast** (RSV, PI3 and Pasturella) or **Rispoval 4** (BVD, RSV, PI3 and IBR).

This year a new vaccine **Hiprabovis Somni/Lkt** is available to give protection against the two most common bacterial causes of pneumonia, *Histophilus Somni* and *Mannheimia Haemolytica*. Two doses of this vaccine are required to provide full protection and some herds now use this vaccine alongside Rispoval Intranasal to give as complete protection as possible to young calves. Please speak to one of the farm vets for more details.

Health status of calves

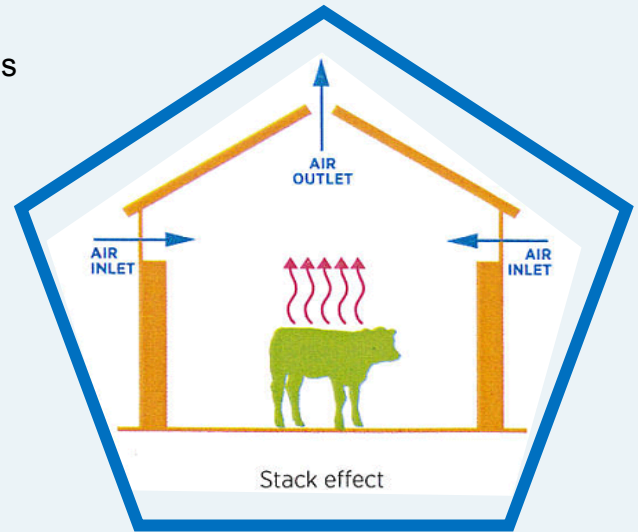
Calves that are in good general health and thriving are less likely to develop signs of respiratory disease than those which haven't. The better the growth rates of calves the less prone to pneumonia they become. In cold weather and in damp, draughty environments young calves use up a significant proportion of the energy in their diet just to keep warm which can lead to reduced growth rates and increased susceptibility to pneumonia. Calf jackets can be very useful for keeping calves warm!

Article continued overleaf...

Size of challenge of respiratory infection

Pneumonias caused by viruses are spread from calf to calf on water droplets (aerosol infection). Many viruses don't last long outside the calf. RSV and PI3 viruses only survive for approximately 1 minute in dry conditions or 15 minutes if there is high humidity. Good ventilation is necessary in a calf building to :

- Provide clean fresh air for calves
- Increase movement of stale air away from calves
- Decrease the humidity in the building
- Avoid draughts at calf level



Most buildings rely on natural ventilation (rather than forced ventilation with fans) to achieve air movement. This relies on the 'stack' effect where warm, stale air from around animals rises and escapes from the high point in the roof as cool fresh air is drawn in through inlets to provide fresh air for the animals to breathe in. Ideally the inlets are situated above stock level so that there isn't a direct draught on the animals.

How we can help!

We are able to carry out an assessment on your calf rearing accommodation and calf health. We can assess your calf building to give advice on stocking density, ventilation (including letting off smoke bombs to assess air movement), humidity and temperature control as well as checking antibody status of calves after receiving colostrum, checking weight gains and dietary management. If necessary advice can be given on the most appropriate vaccination programmes for your farm.



Please contact the
Surgery for further details.

If required we stock calf jackets, colostrum substitute containing over 100gms of antibodies per feed (most contain only 30gms), colostrometers for assessing quality of cows' colostrum and colostrum freezer bags for storage of good quality colostrum.

Herd and flock health planning

Herd and Flock Health Planning are terms that you may have heard, and been encouraged to create for your farm, but what does a health plan actually mean? Herd and flock health planning is an ongoing discussion between farmers and their vets in which a range of issues are addressed. It is an opportunity to look at key performance indicators (KPI) for your farm, analyse annual data, consider medicine use, disease control, and herd/flock improvements (amongst other things). We hope that the changes suggested will help to create a more profitable herd. A Health Plan should look at the whole farm, but can be focussed upon a particular problem you may have.

The focus is on seeing where your farm is currently, considering where you would like to be in 1 year, 5 years, 10 years and ensuring that we control the factors that might be detrimental to your targets.

Examples of areas we may look at are:

- Reproductive performance and breeding management
- Management of calving/lambing and care of neonates
- Vaccination protocols
- Worming protocols
- Treatment protocols for common diseases
- Housing, husbandry and management of the herd or flock with regards to animal health
- Quarantine and biosecurity
- Staff responsibilities and training plans



Health plans will benefit units of any size and by involving your veterinary team in these discussions it enables us to highlight areas where we can provide you with the services that you require. For larger commercial enterprises we can consider the Health Plan as a tool to highlight areas which will improve health and welfare and as a result improve productivity and overall profitability of your farm. It is accepted that diseased animals (whether clinically sick or sub-clinically) are much less productive than healthy animals.

This can be considered in terms of growth rates, carcass quality, reproductive performance, milk production, etc. Furthermore disease comes with a direct cost, be it in terms of medicines used, your time spent dealing with sick animals or vet visits. Therefore having a thorough herd or flock health plan in place to help prevent disease from occurring can have a significant impact on the profitability of your farm.

To create a herd or flock health plan we would arrange a visit in which we would discuss the main issues for your farm as well as take a walk around your site and where possible look at the animals. We may also want to take some samples or measurements whilst on the farm, e.g. faecal samples or housing measurements,



and we may ask to look at records if available, e.g. lambing/calving records. We would then take away all of the information we have gathered and produce a written report for you. Once you have read through the initial draft to ensure we have not missed anything that you feel is important we will produce a final copy which both you and the vet will sign. You can then keep a copy for your records and we will keep a copy too. The report would detail any improvements and protocols (e.g. for vaccination, worming or treatment) that we recommend.

Normally we include some forms for you to fill in over the next 12 months to document important information which we can then use during the annual health plan review. This can then be reviewed on an annual basis or in response to any new issues that arise to keep on top of the health management on your farm. Health Plans can also form an integral part of many Farm Assurance and Accreditation Schemes. If you are looking into joining one of these schemes then please look into the Health Plan requirements and contact us for advice. An ideal period for us to carry out these visits would be in late spring and early summer, once we are out of the hectic lambing/calving period. If you are interested please contact us to arrange a visit.



Do ewe want to
join our club?

Our Flock health plans are designed to offer you the opportunity of :

- * Quality informed advice
- * Flock planning complying to FABBL
- * Targeting your vet costs effectively
- * Minimising unnecessary treatments
- * Detailed investigations
- * Identifying disease early
- * Increasing your productivity
- * Benchmarking your flock
- * Joining our flock club meetings

The package costs £250 (+ VAT) per year and comprises:

Written flock health plan

Flock visits:

*Health plan discussion
Pre lambing ewe visit– condition scoring and blood sampling
Pre-tupping tup and ewe assessment*

Blood sampling investigations :

*BHB (energy status) pre lambing x five ewes
Barren ewe samples x six ewes
Mineral levels as required in flock plan at laboratory cost price .*

Tup pre-breeding physical examinations:

Excluding semen examination

Worm egg counts (WEC):

Pre-drench, post drench, mid grazing season as required in your plan

Post Mortems

Vaccine reminders

Calibration of dosing guns

25% Discount on vasectomy & tup semen testing

For more information please speak with one of the farm vets.

New farm vet—Rebecca Howard, Vet MB, MA, MRCVS.

Becky joins the Dalehead farm team after completing an internship in farm animal health and production in Cambridge. Her role last year involved ambulatory calls to the surrounding area, two routine fertility visits each week and weekly foot trimming. She is very pleased to have joined a practice with such a varied caseload, where the typical day generally includes sheep, beef and dairy. Last Easter, Becky spent two weeks in Belgium gaining experience in caesareans.

Originally from Herefordshire, she is particularly interested in beef cattle, and how management changes can make a herd more productive, although she does enjoy all aspects of farm veterinary work. Becky is currently undergoing training to become a registered TB tester.

Outside of work, Becky is a keen walker, climber and runner. She is very much looking forward to working and living in the beautiful Yorkshire Dales.



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www.daleheadvetgroup.co.uk

