

THREE RIVERS VETERINARY GROUP.

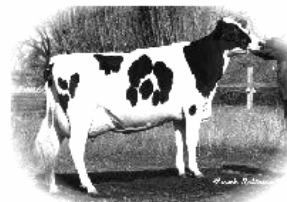
FARM ANIMAL PRACTICE

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CATTLE PRACTICE

FEBRUARY 2009 NEWSLETTER



There are a number of issues which have not yet been resolved concerning the supply of Bluetongue vaccine this year, as soon as things are clear we will supply you with order forms.

Salmonella on the increase.

After four years of steady decline, *Salmonella dublin* has been increasingly found in cattle with cases of systemic disease or abortion by SAC Veterinary Services. According to a recent report in the *Vet Record*, levels increased slightly during 2007 and this change was maintained last year.

While the appearance of *S. dublin* tends to be seasonal, there is a winter peak associated with the stress of housing and calving. Plus the effects of a heavier workload can soon take their toll on management levels.

Outbreaks can be linked to naïve animals moving into new herds, or local spread from vectors such as wild birds. However, using contractors to spread slurry is another risk factor. *Salmonellae* can survive for up to six years in dried muck.

Although antibiotic treatment and fluid therapy increase survival rates, some animals can remain carriers. Far more cost-effective, therefore, is a pro-active prevention and control programme. This should involve good hygiene, stress-reducing management, and careful sourcing of purchased cattle. Vaccination is available in the event of an outbreak.

The battle against calf scour.

Everyone has calves that scour from time to time. Sometimes it is bad throughout a batch of calves, sometimes just the odd

one; predicting scour is impossible, but producers whose calves regularly get scours can be sure of two things: the cause and the costs. The latest VIDA data shows that nearly all cases are caused by either the parasite *Cryptosporidium parvum* (44% of cases) or Rotavirus (also 44%). Some times there may be mixed infections and with 80% of pre-weaning losses attributable to scour, it's the biggest cause of financial losses in beef and dairy calves. Death is the obvious biggest cost to a herd. But even if calves recover, short term setbacks in growth rates soon add up to delays in age at first breeding. Beef cattle take longer to finish and damage to the gut wall make calves susceptible to other diseases and they can become poor doers throughout their rearing period.

In these cost-conscious times, pinpointing the exact cause makes sure that the most effective treatment is used – and the correct preventative approach taken. Both make for more cost-effective calf care.

This is why testing scouring calves to find the cause of the infection can be so valuable. We require a sample of faeces from up to five affected calves; the easiest way to obtain a sample is to insert a gloved finger into the rectum and a little stimulation will usually produce a sample. We require about a teaspoonful from each calf in a sterile bottle, dairy farmers can use milk sample pots or we can provide you with sample pots and gloves. These

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samples can then be tested for the major agents: *Cryptosporidium*, Rotavirus, Corona virus or *E. coli*.

All of the causes of calf scour listed above can be prevented, so to avoid scouring in your calves, discuss diagnosis and prevention with myself or Victor.

Rotavirus, Corona virus and *E. coli* can be prevented by vaccinating the dams prior to calving. When the calves take colostrum from vaccinated cows they acquire immunity against these disease which leads to a reduction in scouring and virus shedding.

Cryptosporidium is very difficult to treat once infection is established; however it can be prevented with a program of treatment with Halocur® which is given to calves within 48 hours of birth, for seven days. Halocur® also reduces the shedding of oocysts and thereby spread of infection.

All preventative programs and vaccinations to combat calf scour must be backed up by good management and hygiene to cut down the challenge of infection. Colostrum intake is vitally important; ensure that all calves receive their first drink of colostrum in the first 6 hours of life and that they each consume 2 litres of colostrum in the first 12 hours of life. The first drink of colostrum will allow the intake of large numbers of antibodies which will protect the calf through the first few difficult weeks of life.

Rehydion Gel – Better For all Scouring calves.

Rehydion gel has a much improved success rate compared to other calf rehydration preparations. This is due to the benefit of feeding milk to scouring calves during treatment. Other rehydration products are not suitable to be used with milk because they contain bicarbonate or high concentrations of citrate which inhibit milk clotting in the stomach.

Rehydion gel overcomes this problem by using the alkalising properties of propionate, acetate and low concentrations of citrate to treat the metabolic acidosis in scouring calves. The big difference is that it does not inhibit milk clotting and hence can be added to milk. It is presented in an easy-to-use gel that can be added to milk. Rehydion can be used for beef suckler calves with scour – provided the calf is still suckling well -

40ml by mouth twice a day will help to correct the electrolyte imbalance.

Next time you need a calf rehydration preparation ask us for Rehydion Gel.

Lice infestations.

It seems to be a bad year for lice infestations on cattle. The cheapest way to treat lice is to use the low dose recommended for Butox Swish. Only 10ml is required for lice control regardless of the size of animal, which means an individual cost of treatment of 40 – 50p depending on the pack size.

Coccidiosis in calves.

Coccidiosis seems to be a continual problem on many farms. The disease may be clinical or sub-clinical, but the effects last for many months and the effect on replacement heifers may be seen through to milk yields in the first lactation.

Clinical cases can show some or all of the following symptoms:

- Scouring usually with straining.
- Weakness, rough coat, debility.
- Loss of appetite.
- Slight fever.
- Listlessness.
- Abdominal pain.
- Weight loss, growth retardation.
- Increased susceptibility in young calves to other infections.
- Decreased feed efficiency.
- Mortalities in severe cases.

Sub-clinical disease usually shows as:

- Weight loss.
- Poor growth rates.
- Decreased feed efficiency.
- Weakness, rough coat.

Prevention of coccidiosis can be administered in the following forms and should be started before the risk period for the particular farm:

1. **Deccox in feed** – usually a minimum order of 3 Tonnes is required (requires a veterinary prescription).
2. **Deccox Tubbies** – these provide Deccox in a mollassed lick (requires a veterinary prescription).
3. A single oral drench of **Veccoxan** or **Baycox Bovis** immediately before the disease period (available directly from us).

The protocol for each farm will vary please contact us for advice for your cattle.

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