

Calf Scour

Scour (diarrhoea) is the most common cause of disease in the new-born calf, leading to dramatic reductions in weight gain and, in severe cases, death. Frequently, single cases build up quickly leading to an outbreak in the calf group. Unusually this year, we have seen a lot of cases in the spring calvers – more typically we would see the worst cases mid winter. Fortunately, there are some basic steps which can be taken to prevent scour:

Ensure a clean environment for calving cows and new born calves. The bugs that cause calf scour are all found in the environment and a wet and heavily soiled pen will considerably increase the risk of an outbreak. Ensure calving pens are regularly cleaned, disinfected and have generous amounts of bedding. If calving outside, try to use dry fields and rotate the field used to prevent build-up of pasture contamination. Colostrum intake is vital. Calves need to receive 10% of body weight within the first six hours of life. For the average new born calf this will mean at least 4 litres of colostrum. If the calf is unable/unwilling to suckle the cow, then it should be tube/bottle feed colostrum. This must be done as hygienically as possible with the bottle/tube feeder thoroughly cleaned and dried between use.

Vaccination of the dam with “Bovigen” twelve to three weeks before the expected calving date will increase the level of protective antibody in the cows’ colostrum thereby giving protection to the calf. For this to be effective it is essential that the calf receives milk from its mother in the first week of life. If your cows have not been vaccinated and a calf scour outbreak occurs a new born calf can be given “Locatim”. This is an oral medication which needs to be given within 6 hours of birth and provides protection against the common causes of scour.

Isolation of a scouring calf will help to reduce spread of the contagious material to the rest of the group. Calf recovery will also be aided by keeping them warm, so use of calf jackets or a heat lamp is recommended.

Before treatment has commenced, if possible, take a fresh sample from the affected calf. We can use this to perform a quick test in the practice to identify the bug that is causing the illness.

Treatment of a scouring calf should be centred on fluid replacement. A scouring calf will typically require 20% of its bodyweight in fluids over 24 hours. This equates to 10 litres of fluid for a 50kg calf. This should be alternate feeds of milk and electrolyte solutions fed in 2 litre quantities every 3-4 hours during the day. This regime should be continued until the calf is no longer scouring. Milk should never be withheld from a scouring calf, as rehydration sachets alone will not provide all the nutrients the calf requires.

If the calf becomes very severely dehydrated it will become sunken eyed, unable to stand and no longer suckle. These calves will require intravenous fluid and veterinary attention should be sought.

Scouring calves will greatly benefit from the use of a pain killer and anti-inflammatory, we would always advocate the use of “Metacam” for affected calves. Antibiotic use in scouring calves is more controversial as the most common causes of calf scour are viral or parasitic, so antibiotic will have no effect. In more severely affected calves with a high risk of septicaemia, use can be justified. Please contact Farm First Vets on 01873 840167 for individual advice on antibiotic use in scouring calves.

Scouring Lambs

We are also starting to see some diarrhoea in lambs. The two most common causes of this are cocci and Nematodirus worms and as these two parasites need different treatments it is best to get a diagnosis first. Worm egg counts will detect both coccidial oocysts and nematodirus eggs, but nematodirus can cause severe scour and death before eggs are present in the faeces, so if there are losses, a post mortem will be required. The treatment of choice for nematodirus is a white drench, such as Endospec, which we sell at a competitive price. There are various ways to treat and prevent cocci which are best discussed with a vet.

Discount on Sheep Abortion Vaccines

If you use Toxovax in your flock there is a 5% discount for vaccine purchased from 1st June – 31st August. This is available to existing users and those using the vaccine for the first time, after having had it diagnosed this year. If you had abortions in your flock this year and didn't get a diagnosis, we can still blood test the aborted ewes to look for the two most common causes of abortion.

Stamp Out Lameness' Meeting

Following the success of their Lameness Workshops last year, MSD are inviting UK Sheep farmers to join some interactive lameness workshops with leading UK Sheep Vets to see how the Five Point Plan might work for their flock. One of these workshops is at USK on Thursday 17th May. Registration, agenda details and further information is available at www.lamblearning.co.uk. Spaces are limited and please note all attendees must register for catering and planning purposes.

Farming Connect Funding

Farming Connect is providing some funding for farmers to carry out animal health sampling and testing with their local vet. The clinics will provide farmers with an opportunity to access support to investigate and test for relevant animal health topics within their business such as blood testing for trace elements or metabolic profiling as well as ram or bull fertility and genetic disorders screening.

The following list of animal health clinics will provide farmers with subsidised analysis and consultation on specific topics relating to animal health.

- Blood testing – Review trace elements, metabolic profiling
- Faecal Egg Counting – Monitoring on-farm worm populations
- Ram or bull fertility
- Leptospirosis
- IBR
- Ecto parasites (Scab)
- Screening for genetic disorders
- Bacteriology – culture and sensitivity

Farmers must confirm their interest with Farming Connect before any sampling/testing takes place. Limited funding available which will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

Staff News

We would like to welcome our new TB tester, Manel Morcillo, who is joining us at the beginning of May. Manel is Spanish, but he has been working in this area for some time in the meat hygiene sector, and I know that some of our clients have already met him in that role. We would like to thank our locum Kostas for filling in and keeping us entertained for the last few months.

Joke

Mabel and Arlene are outside their nursing home, having a drink and a smoke, when it starts to rain. Jane pulls out a condom, cuts off the end, puts it over her cigarette, and continues smoking.

Arlene: What in the hell is that?

Mabel: A condom. This way my cigarette doesn't get wet.

Arlene: Where did you get it?

Mabel: You can get them at any pharmacy.

The next day, Arlene hobbles herself into the local pharmacy and announces to the pharmacist that she wants a box of condoms.

The pharmacist, obviously embarrassed, looks at her kind of strangely (she is, after all, over 80 years of age), but very delicately asks what size, texture, brand of condom she prefers.

'Doesn't matter son, as long as it fits on a Camel.'