

Calf-Link 2

2015



Welcome

With the calves coming thick and fast I hope you have time to grab a coffee and have a quick read of the second of our Calf-Link newsletters. This week we are all about the poo. It's surprising how much you can tell about the health of a calf by what is coming out the back end, although there are probably a limited number of occasions where discussions about bowel activity is socially acceptable. Lucky (or unlucky perhaps), it's a perfectly normal topic for calf rearers!

If you know of someone who might be interested in receiving this newsletter, please let the clinic know and we will ensure they are put on our email list. Also, if you have questions about specific cases or topics, please call or email Elspeth (edunne@cluthavets.co.nz).

The Warm vs Cold Debate

At every calf rearing seminar I have been to or run, the question always gets asked "Which is better—warm or cold milk for calves?". And while it can be a controversial topic at times, there are pros and cons for each side of the argument. A few points of difference....

Warm Milk

- ◇ Calves may be more willing to drink milk, even if feeling unwell
- ◇ Provides a heat source for the calves so they can spend less energy on keeping warm and more on growing

Cold Milk

- ◇ Calves will drink cold milk, and may stop drinking earlier if drinking cold milk if they have a bug, allowing early identification of sick calves
- ◇ No extra time or cost involved in warming the milk

Ultimately, there is no right answer and it is about finding the system that works for you. Yes, there are simple electric heating devices available and heating milk is now easier to do than in the past, but if your system does not allow heating, there is no harm in feeding cold milk. The most important thing is that the calves get fed the right volume, and that there is consistency in temperature - calves do not like having warm milk one day and cold milk the next. Just like kids, calves do best with routine!

COMPETITION TIME!

Want to win a massage to rest your weary bones and muscles at the end of calf rearing?

In each edition we will have a question for you to answer. Simply text the answer and your name to 027 418 2410, and correct answers will go into the draw to win an hour massage with SHINE Massage Therapy. With a slight change in plan we will now have a massage prize for each newsletter!

This week's question—

How much colostrum should a calf be given in its first 12 hours of life?

The winner of the first draw is:

Catherine Tate

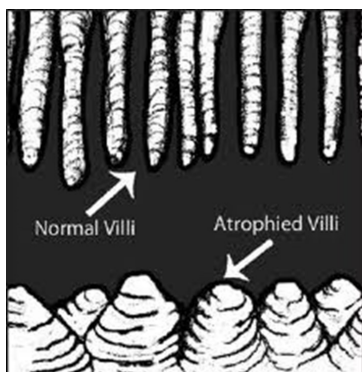
Last weeks answer: Iodine navel spray contains **10%** spirits. The alcohol content helps dry the navel out better/quicker than iodine alone.

Calf Scours: What Happens?

Scouring calves can be a really hard disease to deal with and takes a lot of time and effort, as well as being emotionally draining, as calf after calf becomes unwell. But what actually happens when calves scour?

Most of the viruses and bacteria attach to the gut lining in a similar way. The guts are all lined with little projections called villi which can only be seen using a microscope. When calves get scours the little villi are damaged (or atrophied) which reduces their ability to absorb nutrients, and also causes them to leak. It is what leaks out that causes the calves to become dehydrated quickly (and why there seems to be a lot more coming out of the calf than what it is drinking). It takes time for the damage to repair after the initial damage, hence why calves take some time to come right after scouring, and don't just bounce back.

It is important to remember that it is typically the dehydration that kills the calf, rather than the actual bug itself. Electrolytes are a vital part of scouring calf treatment.



Calf Scours: More Convenient Testing!

It seems we have reached that time of calf rearing where bug burdens in sheds have reached the levels that calves are scouring.

The problem with scours is that the colour, consistency, or smell don't really tell us what bug is causing the problem. While the basic principles of scour treatment all relate to keeping the calves hydrated with electrolytes and other supportive therapies, if the causative agent of the scours is known, more specific treatment can be given to control the spread of scours through the calf shed.

At Clutha Vets we now have an in-house testing system to identify the main causes of the scour the same day you bring the sample in—with the exception of Salmonellosis. The faster turnaround allows you to implement control and prevention protocols to help minimise the risk of the scours spreading through the shed.

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Calf Scours: Electrolytes

There seems to be a thousand different electrolyte products on the market and it can be quite confusing when deciding what to use and when. In mild cases of dehydration it probably doesn't really matter, as long as you give the calf something. If a calf is down, or severely dehydrated, Diarrest would be the gold standard. It is the only product on the market that can be mixed with milk as it uses starch as a carrier which prevents the electrolytes binding with the milk and preventing the proper clot formation. The starch also provides some nutritional value, giving the calves just that little bit more than other electrolytes on the market.

Electrolytes in the basic form are just different types of salts mixed together. While we often use products that are already made and mixed up, home made electrolytes are a great way of providing ad-lib electrolytes to scouring calves, or those that are starting to recover. Alongside just straight water, a bucket of electrolytes can be offered to keep lifting the hydration status of the calves. The following home mix can be an economic alternative to providing these electrolytes.

Home Remedy Electrolytes

7 Tablespoons of dextrose

3/4 tablespoon salt

3/4 tablespoon baking soda

1/2 teaspoon potassium chloride

2L of water

The dry ingredients can be prepared in advance, to be used if needed/required.

Apple Cider Vinegar

While you are raiding your pantry for electrolyte ingredients, grab the apple cider vinegar too (and perhaps an apple cider for yourself). 30ml of apple cider vinegar, given orally after feeding can help with clot formation in the calf's stomach. While this might seem a bit of a weird notion and there may be some scepticism about it working, there are plenty of reputable clients around who swear by it. Considering my father has been known to feed all sorts of things to his calves, including vegemite (fixes everything in Australia!), apple cider vinegar sounds normal enough to me. Anyone want to try it and let me know how it goes?

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