

MORE CALF SCOURS TIPS

Since mid August we have seen a lot of calf scour products fly out the door. The samples that are brought into us are mostly testing positive for rotavirus, with a few testing positive for crypto.

September is the classic time of year when we see calf scour outbreaks due to the increased environmental burdens in calf sheds and failure of passive transfer of colostrum that occurs later in the season. This Spring it's also been very wet making it harder to get calves out of the sheds into the sunshine.

We have had a few reports of breakthrough calf scours in herds that are vaccinated against rotavirus as a prevention strategy. Vaccination is never going to provide 100% immunity, but it will lessen the severity of disease. This is generally true for most vaccines.

Scouring calves that have received adequate colostrum from vaccinated cows will generally keep drinking their milk or electrolytes instead of dropping dead or dying from dehydration. While any scours are disheartening, even the best farms that BRIX test their colostrum, pick up calves twice a day and ensure calves are fed 10% BW of colostrum in first 12 hours will still occasionally have a pen of calves with the 'scours'. Usually those calves bounce back and take less of a growth check than animals that have received colostrum from unvaccinated animals.

So the key points are:

- Calves have NO immune system when they are born. They rely on colostrum antibodies that are absorbed within the first 24 hours to fight infection until they can make their own at about 6 weeks.
- We can test faecal samples in clinic and provide the best treatment against the bug involved.
- Calves that are scouring and not drinking lose fluid rapidly. They need to receive adequate volumes of electrolytes (maintenance requirements + ongoing losses through the scour) until they are back on milk. This is more than you think! It could be 8-10L per calf, per day.
- Disinfection of sheds and hygiene between mobs to avoid spread is very important.

If you have sick/scouring calves don't hesitate to contact us. Usually the first step is testing samples to determine which bug is making them sick.

We can do this in the clinic, often while you wait.



CALF HERNIAS



Last season we did quite a few hernia surgeries when calves were nearly or over 200Kg.

This reduces our chance of success due to increased weight on the stitches holding the hernia together and also increases the risk of aspiration of ruminal contents while the calf is anaesthetised. It also makes for some heavy lifting for our staff!!

If you think you have a calf that has an umbilical mass its worth getting a vet out to check it, as it could be an abscess or a hernia. A hernia is soft and can be pushed through a hole back into the abdomen. Sometimes a hernia and an abscess can occur together.

If the calf needs hernia surgery the ideal age from a surgery point of view is around 4-6 weeks old. If the hernia is bigger than 3 fingers wide then we may have to see them earlier on.

Hernias are normally present from the start so you should have an opportunity to spot one & get us to check whether it requires surgery or not.

Whilst still doable when calves are older and bigger it increases risk, cost and becomes harder for all, so if you are suspicious that a calf has a hernia, get it checked out sooner rather than later.

COVEXIN 10 MAY BE THE ANSWER TO REDUCING THE NUMBER OF UNEXPLAINED DEATHS ON YOUR FARM

Sporadic deaths of cattle are common. Finding a valuable replacement heifer dead in a paddock is disheartening but often just prompts the statement "oh well... where there's livestock there's dead stock" and then things move on. However, many of these deaths can be prevented, avoiding significant losses.

What is 'Sudden Death Syndrome'?

Sudden death syndrome describes deaths that occur due to toxins released by clostridial bacteria growing in the gut. This is often seen in fast growing animals on high quality pasture but can be seen at any time. Another risk is heifers consuming dirt or mud while grazing (clostridia form their spores in the soil). These deaths have been reported even in animals that have been vaccinated. The reason for this is that there are clostridial organisms present in New Zealand associated with Sudden Death that are not covered by "traditional" 5 in 1 vaccines (notably *Clostridium sordellii* and *C. perfringens* Type A).

What can I do about it?

Vaccinate with Covexin 10 which provides protection for the 10 most relevant key clostridial pathogens. The vaccine protects against organisms that cause the "traditional" clostridial diseases such as pulpy kidney, tetanus and blackleg as well as a further five clostridial organisms. That's why we use this vaccine for our traditional "Blackleg" vaccinations.

When should I vaccinate?

A sensitiser and booster shot is required for calves, followed with an annual booster.

As Covexin 10 can be given any time from 2 weeks of age, an ideal time to start the programme is when de-budding calves at 4-6 weeks. A booster can be given 4 to 6 weeks later. A booster shot a year later will provide protection through to calving.

**Superior protection against
ALL clostridial diseases**



PREMATING BLOODS

Why do pre mating blood tests?

The short answer: *to have happier, healthier cows and make more money.* The long answer:

1. If your farm has trace element deficiencies.

Most of the Taranaki ring plain soils are deficient in **selenium** and require annual selenium supplementation.

Too much selenium is toxic so levels should be monitored to ensure enough selenium is present, but not too much. Liver or blood can be tested.

High levels of iron, sulphur and molybdenum in Taranaki soils interfere with cows' ability to absorb **copper** - most notably in the Ngaere swamp area but also elsewhere. On these farms blood, or preferably liver, samples are needed to check levels in the animals.

Many New Zealand soils are **cobalt** deficient to some degree. Blood and liver vitamin B12 levels are directly related to cobalt status.

2. If you have specific health problems.

Some health problems can be caused, or made worse, by trace element deficiency.

- **Zinc** is required for a healthy skin and a strong immune system, deficiency can cause increased lameness and high somatic cell counts.
- **Iodine** is required for a strong response to cold and stress, vigor in newborn calves and expression of oestrus behaviour in cows.
- **Calcium, magnesium and phosphorus** deficiencies or imbalance cause problems with milk fever and grass staggers.
- **Selenium** deficiency reduces fertility and can increase the number of cows with retained foetal membranes.
- **Copper** deficiency leads to anaemia (thin blood which carries less oxygen) which affects all the body organs.
- **Cobalt** deficiency reduces appetite and causes anaemia too.

3. If your cows are not yielding as expected.

As well as trace element status, blood tests can also tell us a lot about the energy status of the herd and the balance between energy and protein in their diet. **B-OHB** levels tell us about energy status.

4. Peace of mind.

Blood testing a cross section of the herd 4-6 weeks before mating can reassure you that your cows are well set up going into mating and give you time to correct any imbalances or deficiencies before mating starts. A week into the second round of AB is no time to discover a problem!

What does it cost?

Depends how many tests you do. We usually bleed ten animals. The core tests are magnesium, copper and selenium. Cobalt/B12 and iodine are cheap to supplement and pretty safe too so it may be cheaper to supplement them than to test for them.

To get the best value for money, discuss with your vet which tests should be done to answer the questions or concerns you have about your herd.

Which cows?

The test results are only as good as the cow selection and this is where things can go wrong. The closer the sampled group is to a true cross section of the herd, the truer the results will be. If the sampled group are all fat six year olds, the test results are likely to be better than the herd really is. If the sampled group are all scungy heifers, the results are likely to be worse than the herd really is. The sampled group should have the same age structure as the herd and the same range of condition. They should all be calved more than three weeks. Holdovers and sick animals are not suitable.

Results

The lab usually takes about 6 working days to do the tests. You should receive a phone call from your vet within 7 working days of sampling. You should receive a written interpretation and copies of the lab results within 14 days of sampling.

MORE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD CONSIDER MULTIMIN

We've seen the benefits of Multimin given to new born calves.

We've also heard how a shot of Multimin given 2-4 weeks before calving can reduce clinical and sub-clinical mastitis in the first month after calving (trial involving 1,700 cows across 4 herds). Do you want to hear more?

Further research of this product in New Zealand conditions has revealed that another shot of Multimin given at or around the time of weaning continued to reduce rates of disease and death in calves by up to 50% (971 calves across 4 herds)

And we're also learning that in a New Zealand field trial (2,168 cows across 6 herds), a 5ml shot of Multimin given to heifers and cows (dairy & beef) approximately 4 weeks prior to mating lowered the empty rate by 3.3%, halved pregnancy losses in the treated group and resulted in cows conceiving on average 3.4 days earlier than untreated cows. In these studies all cows had adequate trace element status & the farms involved had long standing trace element supplementation programs in place.

This demonstrates the benefits of targeted "top-up" injections of Multimin in healthy animals during times of stress and high demand periods where the extra needs may not be met by normal supplementation.

The dose rate is 1ml/50kg in young cattle, 1ml/75kg in yearlings and 1ml/100kg in adult cattle.

Injection Site - Latest label advice from the maker is subcut (under skin) only,

Not in the muscle as previously.

Note - Prolaject B12 and B12+Se are under the skin only as well

