

Veterinary Newsletter

November 2014

Management of Replacement Dairy Heifers

In order to maximise heifer potential and reduce the risk of pneumonia in young calves certain aspects of heifer management cannot be overlooked.

Colostrum management:

The objective of achieving good growth rates should begin from day one with a minimum of 6 pints of good quality colostrum within the first 6 hours of life. The required quantity of colostrum depends on antibody concentration. Antibody density can be measured with a colostrometer.

Housing:

The essential factors in terms of housing are moisture management, fresh air and airspeed. In very young calves lower critical temperature of 15 °C is another important factor.

Maintenance of gutters and downpipes, mending leaking water troughs and ensuring urine drains away from the bedding will reduce overall moisture levels.

The viability of bugs is negatively affected by clean fresh air. Calf hutches with outdoor access will provide new born calves with good air quality and excellent individual calf biosecurity.

Whilst it is essential that fresh air is available in a building, all possible steps must be taken to avoid wind chill, particularly in calf housing. A draught will increase stress levels, lead to depressed immunity, leaving the calf more susceptible to disease.

Disease control:

By vaccinating a group of calves against viral pneumonia it will not only increase the individual calf's immunity, but will also reduce the amount of virus being shed into the building. This will decrease overall challenge levels and reduce the risk of a pneumonia outbreak.

Rispoval@IntraNasal can be used from 9 days of age and will give full protection against BRSV from 2 weeks of age. It has a 12 week duration and ensures cover over the critical pre-weaning period.

Monitoring growth:

Regular measuring of bodyweight/ framesize at set times such as at birth, weaning and at four-six months of age will indicate the need for correctional nutritional changes or veterinary involvement if growth targets aren't being met.

NEW: Finadyne Transdermal

Finadyne is now available in a pour-on formulation which will greatly increase the ease of administration, reducing stress on both the animal and the farmer. Finadyne transdermal is licensed for the reduction of fever associated with bovine respiratory disease. Fever is reduced within 4 hours of application. Meat withdrawal period is only 7 days. Contact the surgery for further details.

Liver Fluke Treatment in Dairy Cows

Only 2 active ingredients, oxcyclozanide and albendazole, are licensed for the treatment of liver fluke during lactation in dairy cows. It is essential that products are selected correctly in order to ensure milk is free of unwanted residues. During the dry period there are some additional products permitted for use in dairy cows. Contact the surgery to ensure correct use of flukicides in dairy cows this winter.

BVD Eradication Update

By October 1st 2014 there were 173,189 calves tissue tag tested for BVD in NI and of these over 950 calves have tested positive. These BVD Persistently Infected calves should be isolated and preferably culled as soon as possible after identification to prevent disease spreading within herds. However, many farms have knowingly retained the BVD PI calves increasing the risk to their own herd and neighbouring herds.

Do I Need to Vaccinate if I am Testing all Calves and Removing PI's?

Removal of PI animals will decrease the amount of virus circulating within the herd. However, if cows are not protected during pregnancy, transient infection during the first 4 months of pregnancy can result in the birth of future PI calves. The most effective approach to BVD control within the herd is to test and eradicate PI carriers, vaccinate to protect pregnant cows and be vigilant regarding biosecurity. On-going monitoring to ensure the herd control measures are working form the last critical aspect of a comprehensive control plan.

Liver Fluke in Sheep

The dry weather in June, July and September appears to have reduced fluke levels and the overall risk will be lower than last year. On poorly drained soils the high temperatures will have encouraged the multiplication of snails and the risk will have remained high. Already this Autumn some lambs from wetter areas have been found with acute fluke.

Flock owners are reminded of the predisposition to Black disease caused by migrating liver fluke and animals should be kept fully vaccinated against this disease.

Control Measures

Removal of carrier animals, as part of a comprehensive control plan, is essential if a herd is to become clear of disease. Monitoring purchased stock for the presence of virus is necessary to prevent the purchase of carrier animals. Due to the high risk of infection in this country it is important that animals are protected until BVD is eradicated. Vaccination of cows and heifers prior to the breeding season every year is advised to protect against the effects of BVD infection during pregnancy.

PASTEURELLA IN SHEEP

Although outbreaks may occur at any time of the year, most occur between October and March. All ages of sheep are affected but it is uncommon in unweaned lambs.

Mortality can be up to 10% of the flock. Most outbreaks are associated with the stress of routine dosing, recent housing or transport to and from sales.

Symptoms include a high temperature, severe depression, coughing and increased respiratory rate. Death can occur within a short period.

PREVENTION

Vaccines are available to help prevent this condition. Ask our advice on the best vaccine for your situation.

It is important that control involves treatment with a product effective against immature and mature flukes. **Please ask at the practice for advice** on product choice, some resistance has been found to products containing Triclabendazole but it is the only product licenced to control early immature fluke.

Store all Vaccines Between 2 & 8°C

Ensure They Do Not Freeze In Winter.