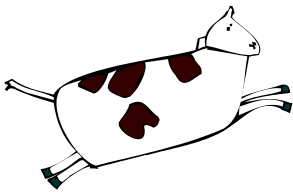


# Friars Moor Veterinary Clinic



February 2010 Newsletter

## Calf Rearing In Cold Weather

We often hear clients say that it is more difficult to rear calves at this time of year. Scours and pneumonia are more prevalent. Here we consider some factors that make calves more susceptible to disease.

### Feeding – make sure they get enough

- Young calves require more energy for maintenance and growth in cold conditions. Energy deficiency will compromise the immune system. This means that under fed calves are more vulnerable to disease.
- Feel the backs of your calves to assess body condition score. Does the backbone feel more prominent in calves 2-3 weeks of age than it does in newborn calves? If so, this tells us that they have been using up body reserves (muscle and fat) that they were born with in order to keep warm. In other words, feeding has been inadequate.
- A young calf requires 40% more energy for maintenance at 0°C than at 15°C. A daily intake of 500g milk solids (equivalent to 2 litres milk twice / day) supports maintenance + 0.3kg live weight gain at 15°C. However, at this feed rate when the temperature falls below 5°C, a calf will be losing weight. It follows that during cold weather more milk must be fed, particularly to the youngest calves which are only consuming small amounts of solid feed. The amount of milk fed should be increased by 25 - 30%. Alternatively, when feeding milk replacer, the amount of milk powder can be increased from 125g to 160g / litre.
- The principal energy source in milk is fat. Use a high fat milk replacer in the winter (18-20% fat). Feed milk produced during the first few days after calving which will have a higher fat content than bulk milk.
- On systems where older calves are fed milk once a day, keep the younger calves on twice daily milk feeds for longer during cold weather.

### **Housing – avoid chilling**

- Calves that become chilled are more susceptible to disease. Well fed calves can tolerate low temperatures provided they can escape from draught and have a clean, dry straw bed that they can 'nest' down into. Use straw bales to shelter calves from the wind - particularly in large open pens and buildings.
- Provide calves with a canopy at the back of a pen made from a wire netting frame covered by straw about 4 feet above the ground. This provides shelter from cold down-draughts and helps to retain body heat which will create a more comfortable micro-climate for the calf.
- Calves born at this time of year are likely to be housed in an environment where there has been a steady build up of disease causing organisms through the winter. If you are experiencing problems try to start new calves in a clean 'fresh' environment. Remember the principal of 'all in, all out'.

### **Colostrum – to remember at all times of the year!**

- We continue to find that inadequate colostrum intake is the underlying cause of many calf health problems. Studies show that when calves rely solely on suckling the cow, half of them will not get enough colostrum. Therefore, it is essential for us to take control of colostrum management to achieve good, consistent results.
- Calves must be fed (by bottle or stomach tube) 2-3 litres of good quality first milking colostrum as soon as possible after birth and certainly within 6 hours. Aim to repeat this about 6 hrs later. A calf receiving two good feeds in the first 12 hours will be off to a good start!
- Colostrum for these first two feeds should be milked out of the cow as soon as possible after calving. If first milking is delayed colostrum quality will deteriorate rapidly as it becomes diluted with milk accumulating in the udder this is particularly true of higher yielding cows.
- Blood samples taken from calves up to 4 days old can be used assess colostrum status.

### **Seasonal Vaccine Reminders**

- Huskvac
- Leptospirosis
- Blue tongue
- Black leg
- IBR

Please contact the practice with your order.