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MARCH 2007 NEWSLETTER

We want to thank every-one who attended the Linwood Agriculture Day. Ag Day has evolved from a customer appreciation day to an opportunity to provide information and exchange ideas as well as we show our appreciation. We hope everyone found the talks informative and useful. We are always open to suggestions for next year and we would appreciate your input.

EQUINE

FOALING TIME IS APPROACHING

Despite the excessively cold temperatures and heavy snow falls, foaling time is quickly approaching. There are many steps to follow to help ensure a smooth delivery so that both the mare and foal are as healthy as possible.

The first thing to do is to identify the mare's foaling date. At four to eight weeks prior to delivery, the mare should receive her pre-foaling vaccinations. In order to decide which vaccines to administer, please discuss your mare's environment and exposure to other horses (e.g. WNV/EWT, calvenza, pinnacle +/- rabies). The immune response generated by the mare will enable antibodies to enter the colostrum thereby providing protection to the foal. The mare should also receive a tetanus toxoid to help protect her during the delivery. At this time, the mare's Caslick can also be removed. A foal vaccination kit as well as a navel spray should also be acquired.

The week prior to the expected foaling date will accompany various changes in the stable. The mare should be moved to her foaling stall and it should be bedded down with straw. At this point, ensure that the mare is closely monitored. The first stage of parturition involves the mare starting to go into labour. Often the mare will sweat, become restless, and will appear anxious. This stage is the longest and can last for up to 24 hrs. At this point, the mare's tail should be wrapped and her perineum should be washed. The second stage of parturition involves the actual expulsion of the foal. It is meant to be a very rapid event and should be over within 30 minutes from the time the mare has strong contractions. If the mare has been straining to pass the foal for 20 minutes and there has been no progression, it is time to call the veterinarian. If the foal is born prior to the veterinarian's arrival, please call the clinic to relay this information. The third stage of parturition is the expulsion of the fetal membranes. The placenta should be expelled within three hours from the delivery of the foal. Once passed, it is a good idea to fully examine the placenta or save it for the veterinarian to examine. If the placenta is being saved, please keep it in a bucket with the lid on to prevent animals from accessing it. If the placenta has not been passed, please contact the clinic because this is considered to be an emergency. The mare can become toxic from the retained membranes and they need to be completely removed.

Once the foal is born, it should be monitored closely during the first 12 hours. Ideally, the foal should be up and nursing within 1 hour of birth. Some foals are slower than others, however, if the foal has not nursed within 6 hours of being born please call the clinic. After having consumed the colostrums, the foal should receive its vaccinations and its navel should be sprayed. The foal should also pass its meconium within the first day. If the foal is straining excessively or appears to be uncomfortable, a foal enema can be administered.

Foaling time is exciting and all the preparation will be well worth it once a healthy foal is at the dam's side. If this is your first foaling or if you have any questions, please contact the clinic.

Calf Management

An excellent turnout at our Ag Day Calf Talk. Don Huffman, calf manager Wicketorn Farms spoke on his experience with feeding acidified milk. Last year he was responsible for 500 calves and managed a 3% mortality. This includes calves from purchased springing heifers where vaccination history is variable or unavailable. A few interesting points: he feeds acidified colostrum right from the start, bottle feeding the first 2 to 3 litres in the first 6 hours. He then places the calf in an individual pen and allows them to suckle free choice acidified colostrum for the first 3 days of life. It was interesting to note that several calves will drink 12 to 16 litres per day around that day 3 and then when switched to acidified regular milk only drop down to 10 to 11 litres. This is double to triple what we normally get into calves at 3 weeks of age.

Don noted that warmer milk can be acidified, one just has to speed up the agitation rate or else you end up with curds. To help keep milk at 20°C they use a 250 Watt submersible water “heater” that they ordered through Nasco – they are typically used to help keep water troughs from freezing. Another comment from Don was that you need to take a week to wean these calves off of the milk or we lose 2 to 3 weeks worth of gain. Currently in inventory, the farm has heifers with a 4 month difference in age, the older ones from traditional feeding versus the younger ones on acidified and there is not difference in height. If one looks at the cost of raising heifers to be around \$2,200.00 to 26 months of age – it sure would be nice to bring that age at calving down by 4 months to 22 months.

As far as the veal calf world, I think we need to think outside of the box. We need to try and connect more dairy farmers direct to calf raisers and work with both sides to improve calf health. If the industry continues to purchase calves from multiple sources, unknown history with calves between 7 to 14 days of age then the mortality will stay at 10% and rise to 15% in extreme cold or heat. If you would like to participate in “thinking outside of the box” please call and ask for Nancy.

BEEF

Most years this area has a significant number of spring pasture cattle turned out to be grassed until Fall. This year it seems likely that all cultivatable acres will go into grain crops and the more marginal land will be pastured. These pasture acres tend to be used year after year and parasite pressure is very significant. You should consider a double endectocide program if you are using these kind of pastures. Deworm cattle per turn out and then again 3 weeks later. With the current cost of the pour-on endectocides this program makes a lot of sense. High risk cattle turned out directly on pasture should be processed with Draxxin. The long treatment time period will decrease the losses on high risk hard to check cattle.

SWINE

2007 promises to be an uncertain year for Swine Producers. The impact of high grain prices is yet to sort itself out. What should Ontario farmers be doing in 2007?

1. Land based farms will obviously put more corn acres in this year.
2. Corn reliant farms have to look at ways to off set some risk. Forward buying is one way but be careful it is a fool who thinks they can tell the future without risk.
3. Maximize production and productivity. 2007 is the year to get things working to peak performance on your farm.

Maximizing Production and Productivity

It all starts by meeting breeding targets!

How:

1. Keep a working gilt pool. Don't be concerned about carrying a few extra gilts.
2. Cull after your breeding week is formed.
3. Ensure accurate Ultrasound preg checking. Early identification of open sows if critical.
4. Review breeding management, timing, heat detection, boar use.

Once piglets hit the crate the goal is economically viable pigs produced at each stage. Don't try and raise all the runts and for sure euthanize very sick pigs early.

DAIRY

Elanco has announced that Rumensin CRCs (Controlled Release Capsules) will remain on back order until at least April, meaning we will have no supply until that time. In addition, supply will be inconsistent until the end of the year. While Rumensin CRCs remain the best product to aid in the reduction of subclinical ketosis and metabolic disease in transition and fresh dairy cattle, the challenge of supply means we must look to other options. Vicomb Choline and rumensin premix are products which when fed in a transition and fresh cow ration can help liver function to reduce the incidence of ketosis or other fresh cow diseases such as displaced abomasum.

Please speak to your veterinarian or feed company representative for information on adapting your fresh cow program without Rumensin CRC boluses.

