



DR. PAUL SOSTAR DR. ANDREW MACLEOD DR. KELLY HAELZLE  
DR. KELLY FISHER DR. MEGHAN WINSOR DR. STEVEN MENS  
DR. RUTH BOWMAN

### Linwood Veterinary Services

1010 Industrial Cres. St. Clements, ON N0B 2M0 519-698-2610 519-699-0404  
Hwy 89 Veterinary Services, 7434 Hwy 89 Mount Forest, ON N0G 2L0 519-323-9002  
1-800-663-2941 Fax 519-699-2081 [linwoodvet@linwoodvet.ca](mailto:linwoodvet@linwoodvet.ca)

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## **NOVEMBER 2024 NEWSLETTER**

### **Postal Service Interruption**

Please let us know if you have a cheque to pick up at next farm visit, or on delivery. We also accept credit card payments over the phone, payments through online banking with all the major banks and the credit unions, and cash. (*Not etransfers.*) You can also pay by cash or cheques by visiting us in St. Clements or Mount Forest. If you are receiving this by email, and normally get by post, we will send out the package when service resumes.

If you are receiving this from one of our team in person, **we would love it if you send us an email!** If you have an email address, and we don't have it, please share it by email.

[linwoodvet@linwoodvet.ca](mailto:linwoodvet@linwoodvet.ca)

### **Huron/Perth Dairy Day – Wed, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024, 9am-3pm**

This year's Huron/Perth Dairy Day is taking place at the Mitchell Golf Club, located at 81 Frances Street, Mitchell, ON. It is an opportunity to see local dairy vendors and exhibits from across the region. Tickets are listed at \$25, and you can register at <https://forms.gle/JVM5Ew12sdytQaKD7>.

Please direct any questions to Melanie Vanden Hoven at [perthdpc@gmail.com](mailto:perthdpc@gmail.com) or call at 519-801-8763.

### **Risk Factors for Bovine Respiratory Disease in Calves**

Bovine respiratory disease (BRD) is a major cause of disease in dairy calves. When calves get BRD at a young age, the resulting lung damage can severely impact their health, growth, and performance for the rest of their life. As we head into the winter season and expect to see more pneumonia in our calves, it's a good time to discuss some of the management practices that increase or decrease a calf's risk of contracting

BRD. In 2019, a team of researchers at the University of California-Davis conducted a study to identify specific risk factors for BRD, looking at pre-calving practices, the maternity pen, and calf housing management practices. Here are three of their key findings:

1. **Vaccination of pregnant dams** – Vaccinating cows against common BRD pathogens (ex. with Bovi-Shield or a similar vaccine) was found to significantly reduce BRD rates in calves which were fed colostrum from their vaccinated dam or pooled colostrum from vaccinated cows. Calves born to cows vaccinated with a modified-live vaccine were 67% less likely to develop BRD compared to no vaccination, while calves born to cows vaccinated with a killed vaccine were 15% less likely to develop BRD. This study was conducted before intranasal vaccines such as Inforce 3 and Nasalgen 3 were available, but these are now also tools we can use to boost immunity in calf populations experiencing high levels of BRD.
2. **Amount of milk fed** – this study found that feeding over 4L of milk per day to calves under 21d of age decreased BRD risk by 92% versus feeding less than 4L. Our national Dairy Code of Practice states that Holstein calves should receive a minimum of 6L per day in the first week of life and 8L per day from 7-28d of age (more when it's colder outside), so no calf in Ontario should be receiving less than 4L per day anyways. This finding is a good reminder that if our calves aren't consuming enough energy and nutrition, their ability to fight off disease is severely limited.
3. **Bedding changes and dust levels** – changing the bedding in the maternity pen 6-8 times per month was found to significantly reduce the risk of calves contracting BRD, because dirty bedding potentially contaminated with BRD pathogens was frequently removed (note that this study was conducted on very large dairies who had a high number of cows calving per month). However, changing the bedding 9+ times per month was found to increase the BRD risk, due to an increase in dust levels in the air from frequently changing bedding. Similarly, high levels of dust in calf housing areas was found to increase BRD rates by 42% compared to calf housing areas with no dust in the air. Dust in the air causes irritation to the lungs, increasing calves' susceptibility to respiratory pathogens. The balance between having clean bedding in your maternity pen and calf housing but not having too much dust can be a difficult thing to figure out, but ideally you want your calves to be in a clean, dry, dust-free environment all the way from birth to maturity.

In summary, vaccination, nutrition (including sufficient colostrum quality and quantity), and a clean environment are some of the most important factors when thinking about reducing BRD in calves. Your calves are the future of your milking herd, and making changes now to ensure they are strong and healthy can have a huge impact down the road for your herd's productivity and longevity. If you have questions about calf health or are struggling with high levels of BRD in your calves, your herd veterinarian would be happy to work with you to identify problem areas and develop potential solutions.

Study cited: [https://www.journalofdairyscience.org/article/S0022-0302\(19\)30512-0/fulltext](https://www.journalofdairyscience.org/article/S0022-0302(19)30512-0/fulltext)

National Dairy Code of Practice: <https://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/dairy-cattle/code2023>