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Orders for Delivery: **call by 9:30am at the latest** for same day local delivery Monday to Friday

24 Hour Emergency Vet Service

APRIL 2012 NEWSLETTER

Clinic News

Please note the clinics will be **closed** April 6 for Good Friday.

7th Annual Waterloo Wellington Beef Farm Tour – April 11, starting 11:00 am at Lester R. Martin's farm 571389 Sideroad 57, Mount Forest. For info call Melvin Steckle, 519-338-5381

Scours Therapy: Beyond Hydration

The importance of hydration in treating calves with diarrhea (scours) cannot be stressed enough. Rehydrating calves with an oral electrolyte solution (or intravenous fluids) is an example of non-specific treatment—meaning a therapy which applies to the treatment of calves regardless of the specific cause of the diarrhea.

There are certain specific causes of scours in which specific treatments may be necessary. Infections due to bacteria such as K99 (F5) E. coli, Salmonella, or Clostridium perfringens Types A or C may require specific antibiotic therapy against those agents. Treatment of specific bacterial causes of calf scours with antibiotics should be performed only under the guidance of a veterinarian, since these bacteria are often resistant to many commonly-used antibiotics.

Coccidiosis is another cause of diarrhea which normally does not affect calves less than 3-4 weeks of age and that usually necessitates treatment with specific drugs. Coccidiosis is often characterized by bloody diarrhea. Treatment of coccidiosis in calves is usually accomplished by using amprolium, sulfonamides. Prevention requires an anti-coccidial such as Deccox, Posistac or Rumensin be added to the Creep feed.

There are other causes of calf diarrhea that are not directly affected by treatment with antibiotics, such as viral (e.g. rotavirus and coronavirus) and the protozoal disease cryptosporidiosis. However, veterinarian aided diagnosis can lead to suggests that may limit the severity of scouring in calves.

Diarrhea in calves due to any cause is more likely to result in the overgrowth of coliform bacteria in the intestinal tract. This overgrowth contributes to decreased digestion and absorption of nutrients by the gut, as well as an increased chance of bloodborne infection (bacteremia). This has led to veterinarians recommending that scouring calves with signs of sickness (fever, decreased appetite or lacking activity) be treated with an antibiotic regardless of the cause of that diarrhea. The antibiotic chosen should be effective against coliform bacteria and effective in the intestine. Therefore, a discussion with a veterinarian about selecting the proper treatment option is critical.

Concurrent therapies such as, non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (eg. Banamine or Metacam) and continued milk feeding to provide nutrients are effective in helping calves survive scours. On the other hand, other popular treatments such as probiotics and “intestinal protectants” may do more harm than good.

All producers have an enormous variety of treatments touted as helpful in “curing” scours. Sorting out these treatments beyond fluids and electrolytes is best accomplished with consultation from a veterinarian.

Colostrum: Building block for the future

The colostrum a calf receives within the first hours of life is the

single most important management factor affecting the calf's well-being, growth and performance.

Colostrum is the only way to provide calves with antibodies for immunity and provides the necessary key vitamins A, D, and E, which help develop the immune system. Colostrum also contains antioxidants, a high fat content, white blood cells and essential amino acids all very important to the initial health and growth of the calf.

Here are some tips for calf nutrition from birth to weaning:

- Feed body temperature colostrum at 3 to 4 litres of colostrum within the first one to two hours of life, followed by two more feedings within the first 18 hours.
- "First-milking" colostrum must be used for first feedings of newborns as the concentrations of vitamins, nutrients and antibodies will be highest.
- Calves should be eating starter grain three weeks before weaning. This allows the rumen to develop to where the calf is able to meet its nutritional requirements from dry feed.
- Calves should be eating 1 kg of starter grain daily before weaning.
- Calves will require increased nutrition during severe weather conditions.

Do not Forget about Rabies!

The unusually warm spring weather we have had so far this year has resulted in wild animals getting out and about rather than still hibernating. These conditions can promote the earlier than usual occurrence of rabies. This deadly disease can infect all mammals, including cattle, horses, dogs, cats and humans, and there is no cure. Clinical signs can vary and they include: increased aggression, excessive salivation and/or vocalization, inability to stand, hind-end or tail paralysis, lameness, dull mental status, "yawning" (vocalizing without producing noise) and other abnormalities of the nervous system. Treatment will not result in any improvement and the animal will die within a few days.

If you suspect you have an animal that may have rabies, contact the clinic or the **Canadian Food Inspection Agency** directly for advice immediately. Minimize direct contact with the animal, particularly its saliva or blood. If you must handle the animal, wear gloves and eye protection and wash with soap and water afterwards. Keep children well away from suspicious animals.

Vaccinate all animals to minimize the risk of rabies on your farm.