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*We will provide industry-leading, reliable, knowledgeable service, in a friendly, courteous and timely manner, to benefit our clients and the communities we serve.*

**Linwood Clinic Hours: Mon-Fri 7am – 5pm Sat 7am – 12pm**

**Hwy 89 Clinic: Mon-Sat 7am-1 pm**

**NOTE: BOTH CLINICS ARE CLOSED SUNDAY**

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

**24 Hour Emergency Vet Service 1-800-663-2941**

## **MAY 2014 NEWSLETTER**

### **Clinic News**

Please note there will be **no delivery service on the Monday May 17**, the Victoria Day holiday. For your convenience the clinics will be open 7-12 am in Linwood and 7-1 pm at Hwy 89, Mount Forest. Your herd veterinarian will be prepared to vaccinate **all dogs and horses** on farm in **May**. Please let the office know how many of each will need to be vaccinated at their next visit.

## **How Producers Make Their Vet and the Industry Better**

Seeking the input of a veterinarian early and often keeps producers ahead of potential animal health issues, but this is only half the story. We veterinarians depend on producers, too. Whether the issue is optimizing facilities, coping with environmental stress or managing bovine respiratory disease (BRD), producers are the first to know what works.

Taking the lead from producers starts at the client level. No two operations are alike, so understanding a producer's facilities, practices, goals, challenges and marketing strategies are crucial to a veterinarian's ability to help each individual operation succeed. The fine details of the animals' environment, like temperature range, moisture level, feed source and delivery method, may affect the protocols recommended by a veterinarian. Even a generally healthy herd is worth checking, not only to make sure they stay that way, but because diagnosing what went right is as valuable as diagnosing what went wrong.

To better understand how an idea or product matches up with the unique challenges of each operation, veterinarians have to go beyond the research numbers to the first-hand experience of producers. And it is producers' drive for self-improvement, balanced by their constant concern for animal welfare and consumer safety, that is required to move the cattle industry forward. It is here where veterinarians are proud to help make sure each good idea benefits as many producers and cattle as possible. What feedback or new idea has been most valuable to your operation? Your answer may be the solution for other producers' issues.

# A Modern Dairy Cow's Guide to Balancing pH

A cow's rumen pH fluctuates quite frequently and for long periods of time. The time spent below a pH of 6.0 is known as Sub Acute Rumen Acidosis (SARA).

Individual cows do not always show overt signs of SARA; the conditions are constantly present for SARA to develop. The costs from SARA have been recognized as the most important nutritional issue of dairy cattle on a herd basis.

A pH of less than 6 has negative effects on ruminal cellulolytic bacterial activity and fiber digestion. Studies have shown that the rumen environment can be exposed to SARA for up to 11.8 hours daily that's almost a half a day with impaired digestion.

Even cattle fed total mixed rations (TMRs) and in-feed dietary buffers like sodium bicarbonate are at risk depending on an individual cow's meal pattern.

A rumen pH less than 6 can lead to changes in the rumen flora and damage the rumen wall. This can mean losses in milk production and feed efficiency. Also, once cows experience SARA, they are more susceptible to it.

SARA is recognized as a herd syndrome, but the risk is not the same for all cows. There are a number of factors that will predispose fresh cows, early-lactation, high-yielding and mid-lactation cows to SARA in any herd. Probiotic feed additives that improve rumen function and increase fiber digestion can help maximize rumen function in all life stages of dairy cattle. More importantly, a properly balanced and consistently delivered TMR will promote a healthy rumen.

Optimizing rumen function can help the modern dairy cow stay ahead of SARA and maximize milk production.

## Reduce Weaning Heifer Risks

Just prior to weaning, many dairy producers have rates of gain between 1.7 - 2.0 pounds/day. A low-risk strategy is to hold milk at half-ration for a full week in order to build up to 3 to 4 pounds of starter intake before eliminating milk entirely. These weaned dairy heifer calves live on a grain and water ration therefore must be prepared to consume and efficiently digest grain.

### **Pre-weaning Rates of Gain**

A common standard suggested for large breed calves is a doubling of birth weight in 60 days in commercial dairy herds. For example, this would give an average of 1.5 pounds per day over the 60 days but the true rates of gain vary by age. Growth rates will be in the range of 0-1 pound in the first week but the eighth week of life they may range from 1.5 to 2.2 pound/day.

### **Pre-weaning Feeding Protocol**

This is an example of what can be done in the last three weeks before a calf is completely weaned and moved to group housing (assumes free-choice water and calf starter grain):

Days 35-41, 8 liters of milk replacer delivering 2 pounds of powder and the calf consumes 1 pound of calf starter grain.

Days 42-48, 4 liters of milk replacer delivering 1 pound of powder, by day 45 calf consumes 3 pounds of calf starter grain.

Days 49-56, 5 to 6 pounds of calf starter or grower pellets

All of these rations under environmental temperatures of 15C or greater should support 1.8 to 1.9 pounds gain.