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Escherichia coli (E. Coli) in Calves

General

E. coli (Enterotoxigenic K99)

In calves the E.coli bacteria colonisation the intestinal lining and cause the cells to produced excess fluid loss into the intestinal tract (no damage occur to the cells). Calves under 4 days of age are susceptible to the bacteria. After this age, the bacteria can not bind to the lining of the intestinal tract.

Signs of E.coli in calves

Clinical signs

- Calves are less than 4 days of age.
- Sudden onset of profuse yellow/white diarrhoea without mucus or blood.
- Calves become dehydrated very quickly.
- Often calve are unble to stand.
- Calves can appear bloated and the stomach "sloshes" when moving the calf.

Diagnosis

Based on severe diarrhoea with high mortality affecting calves aged 1-4 day-old.

Calf side test- Rainbow-6 can be used to confirm the diagnosis.

Treatment

Fluid therapy is essential. Most calves recover well with oral fluids. However, some calves require IV fluid therapy.

Prevention

Cows can be vaccinated against this bacterium and pass the antibodies into the colostrum. Ensuring the calf has good quality colostrum in the first 24hrs of life is essential for preventing the disease in calves.

Reference:

Parkinson, T. J., Vermunt, J. J., & Malmo, J. (2019). Diseases of cattle in Australasia: a comprehensive textbook. New Zealand Veterinary Association Foundation for Continuing Education. Massey University Press, Auckland, 0745, New Zealand.