Rochester Veterinary Practice June 2023

NEWSLETTER

In this issue:

Seasonal reminders:

- Carefully record dry cow identification, date of administration and the treatment used. This will help avoid residue problems at calving if cows calve before their due date.

- Warm dry cow tubes the night before by leaving them in the house near the heater or fire. **DO NOT** put them directly in warm water as this increases the chance of contamination with bacteria.

- Remember to vaccinate cows with 7-in-1 vaccine at dry off – this includes protection against Lepto, a serious human disease. Lepto causes a wide range of symptoms in people from mild aches and pains through to severe recurring flu like symptoms.

- Bull testing- it is best to have your bull team tested and vaccinated 6 weeks before you intend to use them.

Vaccination programs

Rotavec corona

The Rotavec Corona vaccine covers 5 different bugs that are associated with calf scours. Rotavirus and E coli are two bugs that we commonly see in our scouring calves.

The corona virus that causes calf scours is part of the panel of tests we use when we routinely diagnose calf scours. We have never diagnosed corona virus scours in calves. It is heartening to know that corona virus vaccines do exist – even if, as in this case, we don't need it.

E coli scours usually occurs in the first 4 days of life and often in the first 24 hours. Calves have a watery scour and dehydrate and die very quickly.

Rotavirus usually occurs between day 4 and 14 of a calf's life. Calves with rotavirus also get dehydrated but usually survive unless they contract another infection, such as crypto or bacteria, at the same time.

We have identified that rotavirus and crypto are the most common causes of calf scours that we see.

The Rotavec Corona vaccine is given to cows before they calve so that their colostrum contains antibodies to protect against rotavirus and E coli. If cows have not been vaccinated before, they should be given two doses – one at drying off and the other 2 to 3 weeks before calving.

Cows that have been vaccinated previously require only one dose. This can be given either at drying off or when cows start lead feeding 2 to 3 weeks before calving.

The price of Rotavec is **$431.23 (inc GST)** per 100ml bottle.

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Salmonella Vaccine

Bovilis S vaccine covers the two most common strains of Salmonella in cattle (S. dublin & S. typhimurium).

The disease usually presents as a foul-smelling diarrhoea with or without blood and gut lining in the faeces. Cattle usually have a high temperature and dehydration.

Sick cows are usually treated with antibiotics with reasonable success if the symptoms are recognised early. Delaying treatment reduces the chances of recovery.

In the past 12 months we have identified a couple of strains that have shown resistance to the common antibiotics we use. This is a big concern for us.

If we can prevent the use of these antibiotics by vaccinating herds, it is likely to reduce the chance of resistance developing in your herd.

Vaccinating towards the end of a cow's pregnancy will protect the calf for the first 2-3 months of life through the cow's colostrum. This is a much better way of protecting calves than trying to vaccinate them directly.

The price of Bovilis S 100ml (50 doses) is **$348.79 (inc GST)** and 250ml (125 doses) is **$792.47 (inc GST).**

Cows that have not been vaccinated previously require two doses of vaccine approximately a month apart. Cows that have been vaccinated before need only one dose that can be given at drying off or as they enter the lead feed paddock.

Lame cows

With the rain we are starting to see a lot of lame cows.

What can we do to reduce the number of lame cows?

Do not force cows

Put the most relaxed and patient person on the farm in charge of getting cows. Disable the horn on the motorbike and tie up the dog.

As soon as cows are forced, they bunch together and lift their heads and are not able to choose where to place their feet. Slow and steady is better.

Do not force cows on the concrete yard either. If cows are scrabbling on concrete, they will wear out their feet even quicker.

Create a lame herd that does not have to walk far

Keep lame cows in a close paddock and think about milking them only once per day.

Get some rubber mats at critical points in the dairy

This is usually where cows enter the dairy. They often scrabble and fight to get in. Rubber mats will help prevent wear and tear. Cows exit from rotary platforms backwards and then pivot around. A rubber mat will help here as well.

Use Zinc sulphate to help toughen feet

Zinc sulphate can be used as a 5% solution in a footbath or can be used neat on carpet (or even concrete).

Put straw on the tracks

Straw on the tracks will soften the track and reduce the amount of bruising. In many dairies it is only necessary to put straw on the first 100 metres or so. Other tracks, with more cow traffic require straw on the first 200 to 300 metres. The improvement in cow comfort is rapid.

On some tracks it is necessary to replace the straw every week or 10 days.

Other options include rice hulls and old carpet.

When to treat lame cows?

Recent research has shown early treatment of lame cows improves the likelihood of recovery, reduced duration of lameness and reduce culling rates.

If a cow is lame for 2 weeks or more before treatment, only 15% are likely to recovery fully from the lameness event. These cows are also more likely to become lame in the opposite foot and are more likely to be culled from the herd.

Treating lame cows

Some recent studies have shown treating a lame cow by lifting the affected foot, trimming the foot and paring out the lesion, applying a block or shoe to the unaffected claw and giving a NSAID course improves the clinical outcome greatly when compared to trimming alone, trimming and block, trimming and NSAID treatment. Cows treated in the manner are twice as likely to recover from the lameness event by day 35 post treatment.

Wooden blocks or plastic cowslips can be applied to the unaffected claw to lift the sore claw off the ground as well as protect the healthy claw from further wear and tear.

Penicillin (NOT Excenel) is the most appropriate antibiotic to use when there is an infection in soft tissues of the foot. A good rule of thumb is if there is any swelling above the hoof then antibiotics may be useful.

Penicillin is cheaper and more effective than Excenel (or Ceftiosan). The only advantage of Excenel is that there is no milk withhold.

Treating cows with an anti-inflammatory such as Ketoprofen or Metacam will improve cow welfare and may reduce duration of lameness.