

December 2014

First and foremost all of us at Trefaldwyn vets would like to wish you all a **very happy Christmas**. It is been a bit of a **roller coaster of a year** both with **prices, weather and disease**. Fortunately there has not been any **major food scares** although some wally in London is trying to drum up hate for the chicken industry. We all get very fed up with the **rules and regulations** we have to abide by but we have to remember and keep telling the public **that British lamb, beef and milk are the best in the world**. We do have the **highest welfare standards** of any country, our animals on the whole live in relative luxury and we should all be **proud to be part of British agriculture**.

- Let us get **promoting our industry** to anyone that will listen and get a fair price for all.

What are we seeing at the moment?

Scouring calves. There was an excellent talk at WLS at the end of November where by the major causes of scour where highlighted:

Crypto: Affects calves generally in **first week of life**. Crypto is a tough little bug that can live out for 18 months, it loves wet and warm but hates very cold and sunlight. Which one are we best suited to?

It is very **difficult to control / prevent** but with all of the scours **hygiene, hygiene and more hygiene** is the key.

- Pressure hosing with a steam washer, applying a good disinfectant and leaving it to stand will certainly help control it. Keep the calving pens as clean as possible, with fresh straw and lime in abundance.

Try to keep **calves grouped according to age**. A 4 week old calf will be pretty resistant to a lot of bugs which it is passing out. The week old calf will be very susceptible to them and so keep them separate.

- We have had great success on one farm where the farmer has batched the calves into age groups and each group **does not have a span of over 21 days between youngest and oldest**.
- Again this is why a tight calving pattern is also so important.

Halocur is a good preventive but needs to be given every day for the first week of life. Don't over dose as it can kill.

Colostrum is also the key.

- Dairy calves **6 pints in the first 6 hours** of life followed by a total of 6 litres in the first 24 hours.
- For the beef guys if the cow is quiet then **help** the calf suck, if this is not possible then try to **observe**.
- If you are getting a lot of scours then we can **test the antibody levels** in the calf to see if your colostrum management is good enough. If it is poor we can look at **dry cow (beef and dairy) diets** to make sure they are good enough.
- **Minerals and vitamins** also play an important role in colostrum manufacture as well as calf survival.

Rota / coronavirus / E coli: These will affect in the **first week of life**. **E coli can attack very quickly** with calves scouring to death in the first 24 hours of life. Again these bacteria / viruses live **everywhere** but especially in poo. So make sure the **hygiene** on the farm is excellent. If your cows are **looking really dirty** and the first thing the calf does is take in a **glob of poo** from the **bed or teats** then you are **asking for problems**.

If the cows are dirty then why? Are you being **tight on bedding**? This is understandable at the moment but not helping your profitability! Can you **move to cubicles** from straw yards? Or could you **move your calving pattern** to outside? Could you move your **cows to a cleaner calving shed** when they are starting to alter.

- Is the **diet causing them to scour**? Is there **not enough fibre in the diet**? Is the **forage tasting horrible**? Is the protein too high?

Have they got a **disease such as fluke**? Bring us a **poo sample** to have a look at!

Could you **clip their backs and tails**. Clipping their backs will make the **cows less damp** and so reduce the moisture in the environment. The **tails work very well as a paint brush**, splashing the poo onto the udders, onto the backs of cows and into mouths of calves.

Rotavec works very well. This is a single injection to the **cows 4 weeks prior to calving**. The antibodies then end up in the colostrum and coat the calves guts. It is a **waste of time if the calf doesn't then get a good amount of colostrum**.

Locatim: This is a fall back if you have an outbreak and it is too late to vaccinate. It has **antibodies from colostrum** against these diseases. It is a drench to be **given within the first 12 hours of life**.

Salmonella: This is a nightmare. Once diagnosed it never goes away. What we find is that there is a **trigger factor** such as poor milk powder or BVD. The calves become **stressed** / haven't got enough energy and this **disease then pulls them down further**. Improving other stress factors will drastically help as well as vaccination.

Poor nutrition pre and post weaning is one of the biggest reasons for scour later on.

- **Early weaning** before the calf has developed a good rumen leads to scour.
- Calves **not knowing what grass / hay** is and eating solely concentrates.

Poor delivery of milk... Bucket fed calves are more prone to scour than teat fed. Variable temperatures and consistency of the milk and feeding waste milk will also lead to scours.