

January 2011

Calf Rearing in Cold Weather

Scour and pneumonia often become more prevalent during the winter months. Here are some of the factors that make calves more susceptible to disease:



Feeding:

Ensure calves get sufficient energy!

Young calves need energy for both maintenance and growth, however energy requirements for maintenance alone increase significantly in a cold environment.

Calves which are under fed and energy deficient will be at risk of developing disease due to a depression in the development of their immune system.

Increase energy supply in cold weather.

The volume of milk required for maintenance increases as temperatures drop. A calf must maintain a growth rate of at least 0.4kg per day for adequate development of the immune system during the first 4 weeks of life.

A 40kg calf growing at 0.4kg per day needs 5 litres of milk, at an environmental temperature of 16°C, however this increases to 6 litres at 4°C.

The energy content of milk depends on the total quantity of milk solids which it contains.

How to increase the total quantity of milk solids supplied?

- Increase volume of milk given and give larger calves more!
- Increase the dry matter content of milk. When using milk replacer increase the powder from 125g/litre to 160g/per litre. If using whole milk try to feed transition milk produced during the first 3-4 days after calving to the youngest calves. Transition milk contains up to 50% more milk solids than ordinary milk.
- The principal energy source in milk is fat, so in winter use milk replacer with adequate fat content (20%).

Maximise intake of solid feed.

As older calves start to consume solid feed and become less reliant on milk for energy supply. They also become more tolerant to cold. Rumen development is stimulated by concentrate feeds and rumen fermentation generates heat which helps maintain body temperature.

- Provide fresh, dry and palatable calf starter from the first few days of life.

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- Provide fresh clean water: solid feed consumption is reduced by 40% when milk is the only liquid provided.
- Ensure calves are eating at least 1kg of concentrates a day at weaning. In colder weather calves need to be eating even more than this.

Housing and environment:

Calves born at this time of year are often housed in an environment where there has been a build up of disease-causing organisms. If you are experiencing problems, it is better to start new calves in a clean, fresh environment.

Avoid chilling and maintain good hygiene:



Calves that become chilled are more susceptible to disease. Ensure calves have a clean, dry and deep bed of straw, free of draughts.

- Strike a balance between good ventilation and avoiding draughts at calf level. A canopy at the back of the pen provides a comfortable micro environment for the calf
- Consider calf coats!



Forthcoming Meeting - Johne's Control in the Dairy Herd Tuesday 18th January Doveridge Club

We are holding a meeting on the control of Johne's disease in the Dairy herd on the 18th January at Doveridge Club starting at 7.30pm.

We have an excellent speaker, Peter Orpin, a practising farm vet from Leicester. Peter has extensive knowledge of the control of Johne's disease. He is also one of the co-founders of the herd health planning programme "myhealthyherd.com" which we now use in the practice.



And Finally.....

Happy New Year!!!

We would like to thank all our clients for their loyal and valued custom and offer our best wishes for a successful and prosperous 2011!