



Highgate Veterinary Clinic

Farmers Newsletter - February 2005

Calf Scours



As vets, we rarely see scouring calves and as many treatments are bought from the trade, we usually don't get involved in a problem until there are a few deaths.

Treating scouring calves is time consuming, disheartening and costly (about £75 per calf).

There are several causes of scour. The viruses (rotavirus and coronavirus) and cryptosporidia together account for 80% of cases with E.coli and Salmonella making up the rest.

With the exception of Salmonella, these pathogens are present on all cattle farms. Every calf is exposed to them but not all develop disease as this depends on the calf's im-

munity and the amount of pathogen in the calf's surroundings.

All calves must receive at least 6 pints of good quality colostrum in the first six hours of life. If necessary, this should be given to the calf by bottle or stomach tube. Keeping baby calves dry and warm helps them absorb the colostrum and maintain immunity.

Vaccines such as Rotacorona are given to the cow to boost the quality of the colostrum in respect of some scour pathogens. Products such as Rotaaid are given to the calf at birth to boost immunity but they are a poor substitute for vaccination.

Treatment for scour must be given as soon as possible. When you first see a scouring calf, remember that it has been losing fluids into its guts for the past 12 hours. Treat it immediately rather than at the next feeding time.

Fluid therapy is the major (and often the only) treatment re-

quired. Traditionally we've withheld milk for 2 days while giving fluids but this starves the calf and delays recovery. The most recent therapy called Rehydion is given mixed with milk so that rehydration and feeding is concurrent.

Many farmers like to give scouring calves antibiotics but with the exception of Salmonella this isn't justified. They may even make the problem

worse by removing the good bacteria!

Cryptosporidia can now be treated and prevented with Halicur but care must be taken as it can poison calves.

Getting the prevention and treatment of calf scour right can be difficult. If you want any help, please contact the surgery.



Products to treat scour, available from the surgery

New Face In The Surgery.



In the afternoon and evenings you may meet our new receptionist, Alison Thomson.

Alison is a qualified veterinary nurse who has previously worked in Lancaster.

She will be a valuable addition to our team but please be patient with her until she becomes familiar with our systems and clients.

Lambing Checklist



Heptovac P vaccination boosts the ewes immunity and passes immunity to the lambs via colostrum.

Body scoring ewes prior to lambing identifies the fat and thin ones which may need extra care as they approach lambing.

Worming ewes before lambing can improve ewe health and lamb survival and reduce the need to worm lambs later.

Feeding Deccox to ewes not vaccinated against toxoplasmosis may help to reduce losses.