



**THE
WOOD
VETERINARY
GROUP**



Happy New Year!

We hope that everyone has managed at least a small amount of downtime over the festive period to recharge ready to face 2019 head on. With the shortest day over, this is a great time of year to set goals for the year ahead. Altering daily management by a fraction can really boost efficiency and keep morale going through to spring. One such area is calf management:

Solacyl

We have seen the use of Non Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs or NSAIDs go from strength to strength within the practice. These medicines have found a place at the forefront of mastitis, pneumonia and lameness treatments. Their use has significantly improved the speed of cure and return to normal production in these animals. Many farms have also reduced their reliance on antibiotics in the first instance through NSAID use with far better outcomes.



We have also been encouraging the use of NSAIDs proactively for calf disbudding and castrates as well as weaning and group changes especially for bought in calves. Solacyl is a powdered product that can be used from 2 weeks old and added to either milk or water to be fed orally. We suggest starting a 3 day course from the day before the planned event and finishing a day after. As the dose is 2g per 50kg bodyweight daily it is a very straightforward and low cost exercise. When used for stressful events such as weaning and group changes it reduces the overall challenge to calves preventing pneumonia and scour cases that can normally occur as a result. For painful procedures such as disbudding and castrates it significantly reduces the negative side effects such as reduced feed intake and a growth check. For farms that are group rearing this will also be easy to administer compared to injections.

Calves – When do they feel the cold?

Cattle sheds used to be built to keep cows warm but cows are happiest between Minus 15°C to Plus 15°C. This is their **THERMONEUTRAL ZONE**. This is the temperature at which there is no effect on metabolic temperature regulation. The bottom of this range is the **LOWER CRITICAL TEMPERATURE or LCT** at which animals use up energy to keep warm rather than growing.

However, calves are not ruminants yet (an adult functioning rumen is responsible for creating a significant amount of heat – it is like carrying around a kilowatt heater) and so have a very different **LCT** as in the table here:

Even though it has been mild as winters go, the persistent damp weather raises the LCT and so we need to treat calves accordingly. So how can we combat the fact that calves born in English weather will be using most of their daily nutrition to maintain body temperature and are therefore susceptible to disease (little nutrition left for immune function) and are unlikely to be growing well?:

1) Feed more milk to compensate during winter months:

Milk is very quickly digested and calves are more than capable of ingesting the extra volumes suggested when temperatures drop.

As with all calf management, gradually increase and decrease feed allowances. Plan to feed higher rates throughout winter and then adjust if it is particularly cold. By over 6 weeks old they are capable of tolerating 0°C but not below. For calves <6 weeks old:

Calf age	LCT °C
< 3 weeks old	20°C
> 3 weeks old	10°C
+ moisture/wind	Raises LCT

Feed 30% more milk at 10°C

Feed 40% more milk at 5°C

Feed 50% more milk at 0°C

2) Calf coats

Calf coats are an ideal way to stop calves being below their LCT, especially if they are sick or premature calves. They can also be used where there is a short term issue with accommodation but are definitely not the long term solution. Use coats that are breathable to stop sweating and machine washable (must be washed and dried between each calf!). Once the temperature starts to rise or the calf is of an age to cope with the ambient temperature; start by taking coats off in the day & replacing them at night for a week. These calves won't have a good hair coat or subcutaneous fat reserves to cope immediately and so need to be weaned off their coat gently.



3) Nesting Scores



Keeping walls solid up to 6ft and then open slats or blinds is a good start to calf accommodation but straw is a very good way to stop drafts, prevent wind chill and stop calves from being damp and losing valuable heat to the atmosphere. Bedding should completely cover the legs when lying down to get a nesting score of 3 like the photo here. Score 1 or 2 you can see most of the calf when lying down. A damp bed will never score very well as moisture soaks up through the straw and so ensure drainage is sufficient. Score 3 beds are linked to significantly lower rates of respiratory disease – even with the current price of straw it is definitely cheaper than sick calves!

Get a maximum/minimum thermometer up in your calf sheds to know what needs to be done and when!

Medicine Courses



Are you Milk Sure??

Milksure is a training initiative to drive consistently safe and residue free milk production led by Dairy UK alongside BCVA and local farm vets launched in April 2017. It accompanies the elevated testing regimes at dairies looking for a wider range of possible residues. We have already run several farm courses to assist farm staff in ironing out medicine protocols and how to avoid residues in milk through altering daily practices. For example knowing when a medicine has been used off licence, even though it is currently farm protocol and therefore how to adjust withdrawal times to stop a tank failure. It can also prompt financial benefits where extended use of tubes is actually having no effect on cure rate but merely extends the time out of the tank. Pressure to ensure no residue is mounting and often minor changes can provide confident and consistent production. Milk Sure courses involve a theory session at the practice and then a follow up on farm to get the farm certified. Farms that experience a bulk tank failure will automatically have to enrol on the course with the practice. Initially you must register for the course online at www.milksure.co.uk. We will then be notified and we can begin to organise a group training session at the practice. As with all these training initiatives farms that are taking a proactive approach will get a lot more benefit than those attending under duress so we encourage you to sign up early.

Mastering Medicines Courses

Many of you will also be familiar with the Red tractor push for farm staff to be specifically trained in medicine use. In order for us to protect our UK ability to dispense medicines to you on farm we must be confident that they are being used as intended. In Scandinavian countries for example, medicines can not be left on farm and have to be administered by vets, arguably reducing the speed of treatment. Milk Sure training would qualify for this requirement but it also applies to all livestock enterprises such as beef and sheep. This is a great opportunity to complete a training session but also discuss other aspects of medicines such as storage, dose and administration. These courses will be small groups to allow the discussion and training to be very specific to the farms in question.

We will be running the Accredited Milk Sure training courses as required but we will also be running multiple small group Mastering Medicines courses all around the practice area over the year to get as many farms as possible trained in best practice medicine use. Please register your interest to attend these courses with the practice.