

Animal WOFs Newsletter

– Nov 2012 –



Welcome to another *Animal WOFs for Lifestyle Blocks* newsletter.

Each issue we are covering important animal health issues relevant for that time of year. Please feel free to give us feedback or ideas for the next issue, with any topics you would like to see covered.

In this issue:

Animal Health Diary – things to watch out for at this time of year

Scours in preweaning calves and lambs

Mudrash and rain scald in horses

A reminder on worms and worm drenches



Animal Health Diary November



The 5 B's of spring animal husbandry:



Bloat:

Risk factors for bloat in cattle and sheep include high clover contents in the pasture, lush rapidly growing pasture, sudden dietary changes, and low fibre intakes (not enough hay). If you are concerned about bloat in your animals, please call the clinic, bloat can be a serious and potentially deadly problem that is easily preventable with the right management techniques. For more information on bloat, see our November 2011 newsletter.

Cattle grazing lush pasture with high clover content.

Birthing:

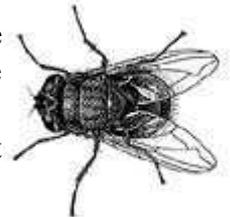
Although most of calving and lambing is now over, we still attend the occasional late calver with birthing difficulties. Monitor animals when they are about to give birth and remember to get them checked if labour is not progressing as it should.

For a refresher, please see our July 2011 newsletter or call the clinic on 368 2891 for assistance with a difficult birth.

Blowflies:

With the weather warming up, flystrike season is upon us yet again. Monitor those daggy bottoms especially of sheep, make sure worming is up to date and use flystrike preventatives as needed.

We now have **Cyrex**, an effective new product to prevent and treat flystrike for sale at the clinic. See the attached info sheet for more information or contact us on 368 2891.



Blood tests:

Consider blood testing for trace elements prior to mating in cattle. This can tell you about deficiencies in important trace elements like Selenium, Copper and Cobalt which can reduce growth, fertility and wellbeing in young stock as well as adult animals. Once a deficiency has been identified supplements like selenium injections or water trough additives can be used to improve stock health.

Bulls:

With cow and heifer mating coming up, take some time to consider the breed and size of the bulls used for breeding, especially over first calving heifers.

As heifers often haven't reached their adult size yet, using a large birthweight bull will predispose to birthing problems which can damage the heifer and compromise the calf also.

Remember: Even a small 15 month old bull can throw large calves if his adult weight is high. Bulls should not be more than 30% bigger or smaller than the females they are running with.

For heifers and small cows, we recommend using low birth weight bull breeds like Jerseys, Swiss Brown, and sire-proven low birthweight Hereford and other breeds.



Diarrhoea alert...

– an update on scours in preweaning calves and lambs –

Who doesn't love rearing a couple of cute little lambs or calves with the kids for calf club or lamb day?

Worried when suddenly the bouncy little pets have turned into sad, sulky, sick animals with very dirty bottoms and diarrhoea?

To give you some guidance on what to do and when to worry, we have put together the following guide on causes, clinical signs, treatment and prevention of scour problems in preweaning lambs and calves.



Causes

Diarrhoea in lambs and calves that are still being bottle fed can be divided into two groups, nutritional and infectious causes.

Nutritional

Often white or yellow sticky runny faeces, the lamb or calf is still bright and often interested in drinking by themselves. Body temperature is usually normal in these cases.

Causes of a nutritional scour include:

- poor quality milk or milk powder being fed
- inappropriate concentrations of milk powder, i.e. too strong
- sudden changes in diet like changing to a different source of milk powder
- overfeeding or feeding milk too cold or too warm, especially to young lambs and calves, can lead to diarrhoea or bloat. Small feeds more often of body temperature milk (around 38°C) are much safer than 2 large feeds a day.
- poor quality meal or mouldy hay



Calves with mild poo staining around the tail but still drinking well from the calfeteria.

Infectious

Faeces can be watery, mucoid, brown or yellow, with or without blood, and will often smell foul; body temperature is often elevated above 39 degrees C but can be below normal if animals are very sick and shocky.

There are several bacterial, viral and protozoal causes of infectious scour. Younger calves and lambs are more likely to get sick with Rotavirus, E.coli, Cryptosporidium and Coronavirus infections, where older animals are more likely to get Coccidiosis, Yersiniosis or gastrointestinal worms. Salmonella & Campylobacter infections can occur in all ages.

Faecal examinations and cultures are available to determine the cause of a scour problem so the appropriate treatment can be given.



Very lethargic recumbent calf with severe scour.

Clinical signs

The first sign of a scour is often a dirty tail and bottom. You may also notice diarrhoea in the pens on the ground.

Healthy lambs and calves should lift their tails when poeing and have only small amounts of faecal staining on the inside of the tail and around the bottom.

With a severe case of scours calves and lambs will get very dehydrated and lose large amounts of fluid and electrolytes through the faeces. This can lead to sunken eyes and increased skin tenting (when gently pulling up on the skin it will be slow to return to normal in a dehydrated calf, in a normal calf the skin will glide right back into place).

The gums are often dry and sticky and severely affected animals are often weak, lying down unable to rise and lethargic with very weak or absent suckle reflexes.



Severe dehydration in a cow, note the sunken eyes.

Treatment

1) Fluid therapy

As scouring animals can die from severe dehydration, electrolyte imbalances and energy deficits the most important aspect of treatment involves fluid therapy.

In animals that are still quite bright and able to suck, oral electrolyte solutions like Revive, Diarrest or Enerlect can be used, these are mixed with warm water and can be given in a bottle with teat.

Scouring calves should be given electrolytes at least 2-4 times a day depending on dehydration status, and receive 1-2 litres per feed depending on calf size and age.

Lambs with diarrhoea should receive the same number and amount of electrolyte feeds as milk feeds that they are currently on.

Newest research has shown that milk feeds should still be continued during the initial stages of fluid therapy (previous recommendations were to give only electrolyte feeds for 24 hours then reintroduce milk by alternating milk and electrolyte feeds). This is because electrolytes will only maintain hydration and control electrolyte imbalances, but milk is necessary to provide energy and maintain optimal gut function.

Alternate electrolyte and milk feeds, with 2 hours between electrolytes and milk, until the animal has recovered and poos are firmer again.

In severely dehydrated or weak animals that are unable to suckle, fluids may need to be given straight into the stomach by stomach tube, or alternatively intravenous fluids can be provided by a vet during the initial stages until the animal can resume suckling.



Stomach tubing young animals requires care and some knowledge of anatomy to avoid damaging the oesophagus and getting fluids into the lungs, so please consult a vet to show you how to use stomach tubes.

Stomach tube for calves

The same applies to intravenous fluids, these need to be specially packed sterile bags of fluids given aseptically into the vein, so if you have a weak and dehydrated animal, please call and we are happy to come out and assess the animal and give fluids as needed.

2) Isolation and hygiene

All sick young stock should be kept warm and dry with good shelter, and put into a sick bay to isolate them from other healthy animals. Hygiene is very important especially with scouring animals as infections can pass onto other animals in the mob easily.

Always make sure you feed the sick animal last, then wash and disinfect all bottles, teats, your gumboots and clothes well before going back in with the healthy animals.

Pens can be sprayed with disinfectants like Vetsan to reduce contamination in the environment and footbaths should be set up for your gumboots coming out of the sickpen.



A good clean and sheltered sick pen for calves.

3) Pain relief

Pain relief (like Rimadyl or Flunixin, specially formulated for cattle and sheep) can assist in recovery with moderate to severe cases of diarrhoea. If given appropriately, these can ease stomach cramps and lower the animals level of pain, thus reducing depression and discomfort. The calf or lamb will be more inclined to drink, thereby returning to full health sooner.

The vet will often give a first dose of pain relief during the initial assessment then if needed leave further doses with instructions to be given in the next few days.

4) Antibiotics

The choice of antibiotics will often depend on the faecal results from scouring animals. Depending on the type of infection and possible resistance to certain drugs, vets can select the appropriate antibiotic on a case by case basis. This may be in injectable form or orally like Scourban.

Even if a viral disease like Rotavirus is found, antibiotics can still be beneficial in reducing secondary bacterial infections.



5) other veterinary medications useful in scours outbreaks

There are some other treatments and preventative oral medications available, that are specific to certain bugs causing scour in calves.

For example, the Rotagen Combo powder is a non-antibiotic aid in the treatment and prevention of calf scours caused by Rotavirus, Salmonella, Cryptosporidium, E.coli and Coronavirus and consists of spray-dried egg powder containing immunoglobulins (antibodies) to the above named diseases.

For treatment and prevention of Coccidiosis either the Deccox powder or Baycox C liquids can be used and an oral liquid called Halocur is available for treatment and prevention of Cryptosporidium in calves.



Again, these different products emphasise the importance of collecting faecal samples for testing to determine the cause and appropriate treatment for a scour problem.

Also these medications as well as antibiotics and pain relief drugs are prescription medications and cannot be given out without prior consultation with a vet.

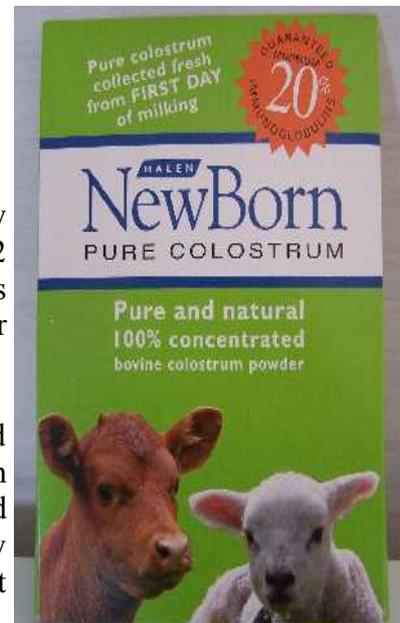
Prevention

1) Colostrum

The most important part of preventing calf scours is Colostrum!

Calves should receive 2 litres of fresh colostrum from a newly calved cow in the first 6 hours of life, and 4 litres within the first 12 hours. Lambs should also receive colostrum, ideally the mother's colostrum but alternatively fresh or frozen cow's colostrum or freeze-dried colostrum powder can be used.

You can safely continue feeding colostrum for the first 4 days and even feeding calves and lambs for the first 2-3 weeks with colostrum will do no harm, due to the high protein levels and continued absorptive ability of the gut to uptake the antibodies. Just avoid any sudden changes and gradually introduce milk powder by mixing it with less and less colostrum in consecutive feeds.



2) Hygiene

Ensure animals especially newborns are kept in a clean and dry environment and transported in clean trailers/cages/boxes etc.

Stress can predispose to diseases and reduce immunity so maintaining a warm, draught-free clean environment for your lambs or calves will help to keep them healthy.

Isolate sick animals immediately and follow good hygiene procedures like footbaths when moving in and out of sick pens, cleaning equipment well, handling sick animals after healthy ones not the other way around etc.

3) Follow feeding routines and guidelines

Feed your calves or lambs at the same times each day so they can develop a routine. Stick to mixing instructions for milk powders and don't make milk too concentrated.

Don't overfeed animals, smaller feeds more often are much better tolerated.

Feed milk warmed to body temperature, not too cold, not too hot.

See the Appendix for guidelines of feeding amounts please.



4) Preventative treatments

If you have had scour problems in the same location in the previous year, consider spraying the sheds regularly with disinfectants like Vetsan, consider removing the old bedding and replacing it with new stuff to reduce contamination in the environment.

Also consider preventative treatments like Rotagen Combo, Halocur or Deccox if you had severe scour outbreaks the previous season or in earlier born calves. This can prevent or at least reduce severity of diseases in any new calves coming through the same shed.

5) Purchase healthy calves and lambs to start off with

If the lambs are not your own orphaned triplets or twins and you are planning to purchase either calves or lambs for the kids or yourself to raise, ensure that the young stock you are starting with are in good health.

Check over calves and lambs well before purchase and consider the following checklist to ensure animals are healthy.

Look for:

- large, good body condition
- dry, clean, swinging tails
- clean back legs
- bright eyes, not sunken
- ears up and alert, interested
- shiny, supple coat
- relaxed (not hunched) posture
- no discharges from the eyes and nose
- no breathing 'noises'
- good appetite and suckle reflex
- small, dry and shrivelled navel

Avoid:

- small and runty
- faecal staining around tail
- dirty bottom
- sunken and dull eyes
- ears hanging down
- shaggy dirty coat
- hunched posture or unable to rise
- discharges from eyes or nose
- coughing
- weak or no suckle reflex
- moist, swollen and painful navel

If you have any concerns or questions about scours in calves, lambs and other species also, please don't hesitate to contact us for advice on the appropriate treatment.



A bright and healthy young lamb, no evidence of scour.

Appendix:

Feeding recommendations for calves:

- Initially good quality colostrum from a freshly calved cow or frozen, 2 litres within the first 6 hours of birth, then continue colostrum for first 4 days of life
- 5-10 days of age feed good quality milk powder, 2 litres twice daily, with about 8 hours in between feeds
- 11-21 days feed 2.5 litres twice daily
- 21 days to weaning feed 3 litres twice daily
- introduce calf pellets and hay at 1 week to encourage rumen development
- always offer fresh water
- wean at a minimum around 100kg liveweight, make sure calves are grazing well by then
- when increasing amount of milk to the next level, do this gradually, for example feed 2 1/4 litres twice daily on day 11 and 12 then increase to 2.5 litres on day 13

Feeding recommendations for lambs and kids:

- Initially good quality colostrum from a freshly lambing ewe, a freshly calved cow or frozen or dried, 100ml within the first 6 hours of birth and again before 12 hours of life
- Days 1 and 2, feed colostrum 100ml warmed to body temperature 6 times a day
- Days 3 and 4, feed colostrum, gradually increasing to 150ml 6 times a day
- Days 5-7 introduce milk powder (initially mix with colostrum to avoid sudden change) increasing up to 250mls 4 times a day
- Days 8-21 gradually increase milk powder to 350ml 4 times a day
- Day 22 until weaning gradually increase milk powder to 500ml twice daily
- introduce lamb pellets and hay at 1 week old to encourage rumen development
- always offer fresh water
- wean from 8- 12 weeks depending on amount of grazing and when lamb day is
- childrens pet lambs for lamb day at school can be bottle fed smaller amounts more frequently to encourage bonding to the child



<= Two newborn lambs, rejected by the mother, ready for bottle feeding.



The same lambs (with halters on) 3 months later, just weaned from the above feeding guidelines =>

Its raining again!

- a review of Rain scald and Mud rash in horses -

Although we are just past the really wet time of year, we still get a fair amount of rain even in spring. With the rain come some unwelcome problems: Rain Scald and Mud Rash!

The medical term for Rain Scald and Mud Rash is Dermatophilosis, which is an infectious disease caused by gram positive anaerobic bacteria called *Dermatophilus Congolensis*, which is commonly found on your horses skin and/or in the soil.

Under normal circumstances these bacteria will help protect the horses skin from getting infected by other bacteria, but when the skin gets in constant contact with water and mud, these bacteria start to flourish and cause infections.



A horses footprint in a muddy paddock.

Some horses seem to be more predisposed to develop Mud Rash or Rain Scald than others; horses with white feet and long hair (mane, tail and on the legs) are more prone.

Rain Scald is most commonly seen on the back and under the mane of your horse. The crusts can be small and numerous or large with some pus underneath. They can be painful for the horse.

Mud Rash is usually seen below and around the fetlock joint of usually (but not exclusive to) the white foot. The skin can be cracked and sore.

Severe rain scald in a horse with purulent discharge.

Mud rash on a horses legs.



Treatment sounds really simple: remove the horse from exposure to moist conditions, but is not always possible in this time of year. If you can keep your horse dry, the *Dermatophilosis* may spontaneously disappear.

If this is not an option for you, then treatment is needed:

Take the horse out of the paddock and wash all the mud off the affected areas. You can wash your horse with topical antibacterial products like Chlorhexidine, Halamid or Iodine Shampoo to remove as many bacteria and crusts as possible. The crusts will start to loosen and will be removed easily when you soak them for at least 10 min. Keep in mind though that the crusts are infectious for your other horses and dispose of them appropriately. Wash your horse once a day for 7 days with the Iodine or Chlorhexidine Shampoo, then once a week until the wounds have fully healed.

If your horse is painful and there is a lot of purulent discharge involved, antibiotics can be used to help clean up your horses *Mud Rash* or *Rain Scald*. Talk to your vet regarding treatments.

Iodine wash, Halamid and Chlorhexidine can be purchased from Levin & Horowhenua Vets.

A reminder on worms and worm drenches

One of our vets was recently called to a very sick heifer calf, losing weight, very dehydrated and pale in the gums as well as scouring profusely, with a history of drenching with an oral drench a week prior.

Sadly this animal passed away before vet arrival and a post mortem exam was carried out which showed a large number of small bleeding ulcers and evidence of a severe worm burden in the abomasum (fourth stomach).

It was discovered that the animal may have been missed at the recent drenching as all other heifers in the mob were doing well.

The inside wall of an abomasum at post mortem, showing lots of small red bleeding ulcers. These occur with severe worm burdens and can contribute to severe illness or death



Please remember:

As worm burdens are rising in this warm but still moist weather, ensure that worm drenches especially for young stock are kept up to date.

Ensure that drench guns are working properly and drench at the correct doses (if weight variation is too big in a mob, separate the animals into groups of sizes, also use weigh bands or scales to ensure animals aren't under or over drenched).

Make sure you mark animals drenched with an oral drench so none are missed or drenched twice.

Use a good quality drench that will cover animals for all types of worms.

For any questions or concerns please don't hesitate to contact us at the clinic.

Looking forward to see you at the clinic or at your place,

*Step of the team
@ LHVC.*

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