Farm Newsletter
February 2018

alnorthumbria veterinary group

Anyone who attended our farm client meeting at The Coquetvale in Rothbury last week will know that we picked popular topics of BVD and Maedi Visna as there wasn't even standing room left! Hopefully it was a good update and an explanation of why annual testing and vaccination go hand-in-hand. One useful point that came up from our speaker from SAC Lab is that they will **post-mortem** 3 sheep (taken to them at St Boswells live or dead) for £84+VAT including all testing, but excluding disposal. Whilst we like to do post-mortems for you on farm, the cost of individual testing adds up to much more than this normally. Please contact us if this is of interest to you.

Despite the recent cold spell, we're still seeing several cases of **pneumonia** in cattle and sheep, often appearing as sudden deaths. In calves, vaccines given in the autumn may be wearing off now and the *Pasteurella* cover in sheep vaccines doesn't seem to last a whole year so a booster for lambs / hoggs in the autumn is often required to prevent problems over the winter.

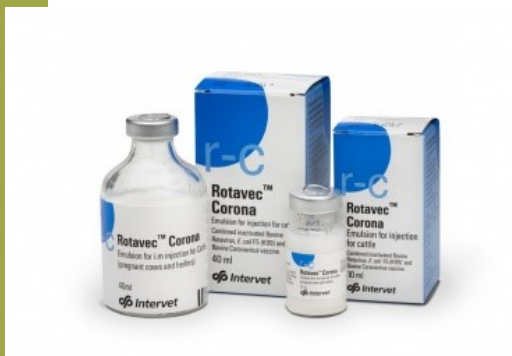
Boost Colostrum Quality to Beat Calf Scours

With the calving season almost upon us remember that vaccination of the cow against the common infectious causes of calf scour (Rotavirus, Coronavirus and *E.coli* K99) and then feeding the antibody-enriched colostrum to your calves should play a vital role in your control programme.

Calf scours cost you money. ADAS estimates the cost of a scour outbreak in a 100-cow suckler herd (assuming 90 calves born) to be £5,794. The potential cost saving of preventing a scour outbreak by vaccinating cows pre-calving with Rotavec® Corona is therefore more than £4000. That's a pretty healthy financial benefit!

Calves are most at risk from infectious scour in the first 3-4 weeks of life and need a source of continuous protection – through passive transfer of antibodies in the colostrum – to keep them healthy. On many units, normal colostrum does not provide enough antibodies. However, vaccination of the calf's mother with Rotavec® Corona between 12 and 3 weeks before calving boosts colostrum quality, allowing you to feed high levels of antibodies against Rotavirus, Coronavirus and *E.coli* K99 in early life. Make sure calves receive at least three litres of this high quality colostrum within the first six hours after birth.

Rotavirus remains one of the most prevalent infectious scour-causing pathogens on UK calf units and it is very difficult to treat calves against this type of viral scour. The only effective disease management strategy is to vaccinate the dam to help boost calf disease immunity through plentiful, high quality colostrum feeding, as well as implementing sound hygiene practices.



It really is well worth boosting colostrum quality this winter by vaccinating cows with Rotavec® Corona.

Editor's note—Hopefully, your calving pattern will be nice and tight so all cows can be vaccinated as a batch. However, any cows not bagging up 10 weeks after the vaccination is given should be re-vaccinated to provide another 12 weeks cover. The calves born to these cows have the highest risk of infection as the bugs build up ion the shed. The vaccine is available in 5 and 20 dose bottles

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Lame Lambs? - Max Ling

Go to any hospital in the UK and chances are you will notice strategically placed signs all over the corridors asking, and even teaching, you how to wash your hands! There will be automatic dispensers which administer just a little bit too much extremely potent smelling gel, leaving you waving both hands around as you walk on. As the medical world has taken gigantic leaps with technology and science, one simple factor has remained key to improving survival rates and minimizing mortality; hygiene. If hygiene is so important to the medical field, why is it so often ignored in the livestock world? Granted we have a much harder job given that our patients are not usually in a sterile environment, but this just means we must try harder!

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Last lambing and calving season, Alnorthumbria saw a larger than normal caseload of navel ill, joint ill and septicemia. Although illness and disease can sometimes be unavoidable, correct hygiene and management practices can make some conditions far less common.

Navel ill occurs when bacteria from the environment track up the navel and cause abscesses to form. As the navel provides the fetus's blood supply in the womb, these bacteria have the ability to rapidly enter the bloodstream of the newborn and spread around the whole body. This can in turn lead to conditions such as septic arthritis, *E.coli* ('Watery Mouth' and scour) and spinal abscesses.

One of the most important methods of prevention involves applying solutions such as iodine or Hibiscrub to the naval shortly after birth. This has 2 effects; one to dry the navel to close off any possible route of infection, and secondly to act as an anti-septic. Equally, swift and adequate colostrum intake is a vital factor; until that first intake the newborn is hugely immuno-compromised and much more vulnerable to any invading bacteria. Remember, lambs require 50ml/kg within the first hour and calves 5-6% of their bodyweight within the first 6 hours of life (usually around 3L).

All lambings and calvings have the potential to be unhygienic. Firstly ensure all lambing and calving sheds are clean, well-ventilated and freshly bedded. Ensure these pens are not over-stocked. During parturition, if any intervention is needed, ensure you and any equipment used is as clean as possible. If you choose not use disposable gloves ensure your hands and arms have been thoroughly disinfected, if equipment is needed it should have been cleaned and disinfected between uses (including all ropes). The rear end of the animal can be wiped with paper towel and even washed with water if there has been any faecal contamination, if this occurs during the birthing process, stop if possible and wash again. After parturition, if going into another pen ensure it has been freshly bedded and disinfected with lime, Mistral or Stalosan drying powders in-between occupants. The beds should be fully replaced as much as physically possible and not just topped up, and all remnants of afterbirth should also be removed. If you would like further advice on prevention please speak to one of our vets before you are due to start lambing and calving; fail to prepare, prepare to fail!

SAC Joint Ill Project 2017 Results Summary—Pam Brown

- 63.6% of the 59 lambs examined were tup lambs—consider treating their navels with iodine twice.
- The bacterium *Streptococcus dysgalactiae* was the cause of joint ill in 67% of flocks.
- Where this particular bacteria was identified, 87.5% of lambs had joint ill in more than 1 joint but other organs were rarely affected, as opposed to other bacteria where concurrent infection was seen in the liver, lungs etc.
- *Strep. dysgalactiae* caused bigger outbreaks of joint ill than other bacteria did and affected indoor and outdoor lambing flocks.
- In 83% of flocks affected by *Strep. dysgalactiae*, joint ill occurred in lambs born during the first week of lambing i.e. it doesn't appear to be associated with the build up of infection towards the end of lambing.
- There is not always an association between poor colostrum intake and cases of *Strep. dysgalactiae* joint ill.
- All farms affected by *Strep. dysgalactiae* reported a poor response to antibiotics, some response was seen when other bacteria were the cause.
- 72% of flocks with *Strep. dysgalactiae* joint ill were giving routine antibiotics (Spectam, Betamox, Orojet, Penstrep etc.) at birth and / or turnout and these did not prevent outbreaks of joint ill. In the lab, penicillins were effective but oxytetracyline was not.
- What did appear to work was turning ewes and lambs out onto re-seeded fields, moving to a different lambing shed during lambing, treating navels with Bactakil.
- No commercial vaccine is available for *Strep. dysgalactiae* but in December 2017, a flock-specific vaccine was made on 1 farm using bacteria isolated from that flock.

Please note, Eryvac is no longer licensed and does not cover the most common types of bacteria causing joint ill.

Don't Forget to Use...

- **Mistral** or **Stalosan** disinfectant / drying agent for lambing / calving pens.
- **Solantel or Flukiver** (£92.68 / 5L) fluke treatment now for sheep if not yet done in 2018.
- **Heptavac P** (£140 / 500ml) (or Covexin / Bravoxin for certain farms) for boosters 4-6wks pre-lambing.
- **Rotavec Corona** (£7.50 / dose) for spring calvers to prevent calf scour.
- **Ectofly** (£66.69 / 5L) **/ Dysect** (£53.54 / 5L x 4+) at scanning to prevent tick abortions.

Additionally, we have frozen our plan prices for 2018; therefore you can be confident that we can provide an excellent veterinary service without fear of rising costs.

MiFarmVets