

FARMER GUIDE

CALF SCOUR



Introduction

- The most common disease of dairy-bred calves
- Most commonly caused by a combination of viruses, bacteria and parasites (e.g. *rotavirus*, *E. coli*, *coccidia* and *cryptosporidia*) that can spread from calf to calf
- Effective scour prevention program can be simplified into two areas of focus. Maximise immune function in your calves and minimise their exposure to disease.



Causes

- Poor hygiene in calving area (a dirty calving environment could expose new born calves to scour causing pathogens).
- Low colostrum intake (colostrum contains antibodies that help protect calves)
- Underfeeding increases susceptibility to disease
- An unhygienic environment
 - Overcrowding
 - Mixing age groups
 - Use of pens for young calves without regular cleaning and disinfection
 - Spreading infection from older to younger calves on milk feeders or stockpersons' clothing



Impact

- Reduced short-term growth rates
- Treatment costs and labour associated with diseased animals
- Increased likelihood of suffering from other diseases such as pneumonia



SUMMARY

- A common cause of mortality and reduced growth rates
- Prevent through good colostrum provision and improving hygiene

Prevention

- If you feel that scour is affecting your calves speak to your vet about identifying the cause, infection or nutritional, and preventative strategies eg. vaccination
- Ensure adequate colostrum provision for calves
 - Get your vet to check if adequate colostrum levels are being provided
 - Prolonged colostrum feeding is common but beware of spreading diseases such as Johne's to young calves
- Ensure calving areas are kept clean and hygienic.
 - Ideally clean individual calving pens after each birth.
 - Clean out loose housing calving area regularly.
- If allowing suckling of the dam consider preparing the udder by removing any dirt and bacteria which has built up over the dry period.
- Maintain a clean environment for young calves
 - Clean and disinfect pens between batches of calves
 - Prevent contact between animals of different ages
- Ensure adequate calorie provision to promote immune status