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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.
- f 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

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