

Calf Pneumonia

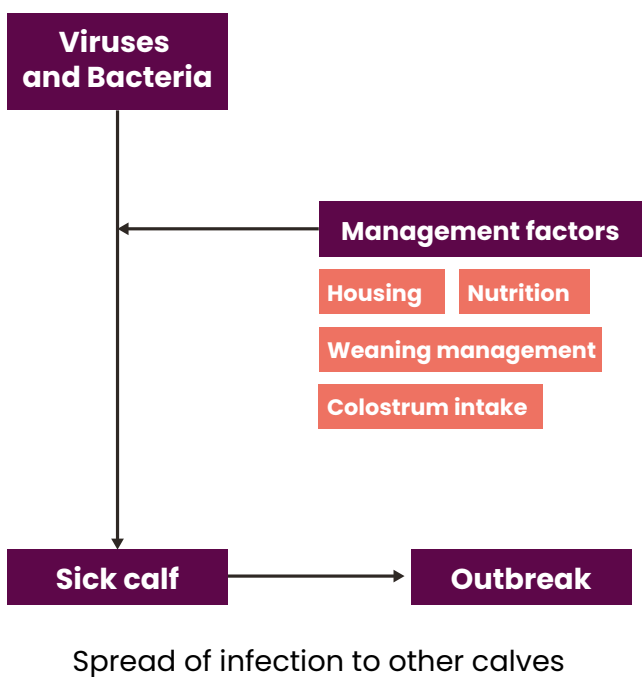


Introduction

- Extremely common problem in young cattle
- Most common cause of death in dairy-bred calves
 - Highest risk period is the first 12 weeks of life

Causes

- Calf pneumonia is caused by a mixture of viruses and bacteria
- In most cases there are management factors that make the calf more likely to become diseased
 - Poor ventilation – the bacteria and viruses which cause pneumonia survive better in moist, stale air
 - Wind speed – young calves exposed to moderate draughts will use too much energy to keep warm and are more likely to get pneumonia
 - Cold stress – young calves will get cold in standard UK winter temperatures
 - Underfeeding – especially in cold weather. Calves will cope with low temperatures if extra calories are provided
 - Weaning management – calves need to be gradually weaned so that calorie intake from hard feed is sufficient prior to stopping milk feeding
 - Mixing age groups – allows disease to spread from older to younger calves





Impact

- Pneumonia is the biggest killer of calves from the dairy herd
- Lung damage in affected calves will also reduce productivity through:
 - Reduced growth rates
 - Treatment costs (medicines, labour, vet costs)
- Even after the animals have apparently recovered losses can occur through:
 - Reduced performance in 1st lactation (dairy heifers)
 - Long term impact on weight gain and carcass grading (beef calves)

Prevention

- Pneumonia control should be discussed with your vet
- Reduce the risks through
 - Improve air quality in cattle sheds
 - Prevent cold stress in young calves
 - Ensure sufficient calorie intake in cold weather

Summary

- Most common cause of death in young calves
- Long-term impacts of disease
- Highest risk in young calves in cold months
- Ensure sufficient calorie intake at high risk periods to promote resistance to disease