



### PRACTICE FOCUS – AN INVESTIGATION INTO HIGH CALF MORTALITY

The owner of a dairy herd became concerned when high numbers of his heifer replacements were dying within the first few weeks of life. Speaking to a vet out on a visit, it was clear that the farmer went to great lengths to assure these calves got the best start in life; this was doubling his disappointment and frustration with the current situation. It was decided that a critical look at the calf rearing was needed to identify where things were going wrong, Natasha, our farm vet with a keen interest in calf health, was sent to investigate and create a calf health plan for going forward.

The very young age of calves dying with a mixture of scours and pneumonias pointed towards an issue with the calves immune status i.e. colostrum transfer – QUALITY, QUANTITY, QUICKLY! The standard protocol was to leave the calf with the dam for 24hrs in the calving box and observe, if not seen to suck well unaided within the first hours, an expensive well branded colostrum replacement was administered.

As part of the assessment the following areas were also critically assessed and were found generally to be good with little action required – Calving box cleanliness and location, calving protocol, calf nutrition, housing (incl. air flow, grouping, cleanliness, temperature & humidity). Current pathogens (diseases) present on the farm are currently being identified, monitoring and control plans shall then be put in place.

**A group of 7 calves between 2-9 days of age were tested by blood sample for colostrum transfer, this is a quick, cheap, clear test we can perform in the practice (results usually the same day). All 7 calves tested as complete failure of colostrum transfer indicating they absorbed insufficient antibodies (IgG) for protection against the normal bugs every calf meets in its environment.**

Insufficient high quality colostrum was determined as the major problem. Clear instructions were given on the use of a colostrometer to identify good quality colostrum and the client now regularly freezes good quality colostrum in 1.5 litre freezer bags for quick defrosting as required. Since then the calf health has improved greatly and follow up testing is showing good colostrum transfer in these calves; we are continuing to monitor the calves performance on this farm to try and identify any further issues, remembering that the initial assessment is only a snapshot in time and whilst a major issue was identified there may be smaller areas where improvement can be made that will be more apparent with time.



We have recently become aware that many farmers are feeding artificial colostrum when the dam fails to provide. Worse still some are giving it to all calves prior to it suckling the dam, therefore reducing the calf's appetite for true colostrum! This is a serious problem as calves rely completely on the dams colostrum to 'stock' their immune system. For a functioning immune system it must intake a minimum of 150g IgG within 6hrs of birth.

NO CURRENT COLOSTRUM SUPPLEMENT HAS ANYWHERE NEAR THIS AT MOST THEY GIVE 16 - 25g IgG PER PACK. Good dairy cow colostrum (1<sup>st</sup> milking only) averages 60g IgG/ltr, whilst good beef colostrum contains around 120-140g IgG/ltr, i.e. 3 litres of dairy colostrum gives 180g IgG; enough to give a robust immune system. One pack of artificial colostrum provides only between 1/6<sup>th</sup>-1/8<sup>th</sup> of the IgG needed for the calf to survive and thrive in its environment!

Recently a colostrum REPLACER '**IMMUCOL PLATINUM**' has been approved in the UK. We now have it available to order as we are satisfied it can benefit clients where freezing colostrum is extremely difficult or have a Johnes control issue. It is guaranteed to contain between 85-100g IgG as fed. This still does not fully provide enough IgG for a fully functioning immune system, but is as close as you can manage out of a packet. Where no alternate is available we endorse this products use.



# CONGRATULATIONS MICHAEL

## Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice (Cattle)

Over the past 3 years, Michael has been working hard in his own time towards gaining a Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice (Cattle). To be eligible for this exam, he has completed six study modules, case studies, research and courses.

On 15<sup>th</sup> of June, he travelled to Liverpool and passed his final oral and practical examinations. We would like to recognize the extensive further study into cattle production he has put in to accomplish this, and we are very proud of his achievement.

Well done Michael! 😊



## ARE YOUR DOGS MICROCHIPPED

From 2016, by law all dogs in Scotland must be microchipped.

'The Dogs Trust' are kindly sponsoring microchipping (DOGS ONLY) so it will be **FREE**

**Starting: 17<sup>th</sup> July for 6 months**

Due to equipment needed, dogs must be brought into practice, **PLEASE CALL AHEAD**

## BVD PHASE 4 – IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER

- ANIMALS FROM NOT NEGATIVE HERDS CAN ONLY BE MOVED AFTER INDIVIDUALLY TESTING BVD NEGATIVE
- ANIMALS FROM NEGATIVE HERDS CAN BE MOVED however
- IF ANIMALS FROM A NEGATIVE HERD THAT HAVE NOT BEEN INDIVIDUALLY TESTED, MOVE TO A NOT NEGATIVE/UNKNOWN STATUS HOLDING, THEY BECOME UNKNOWN STATUS AND REQUIRE EITHER ISOLATED & TESTED ON RETURN OR TESTED BEFORE THEIR RETURN TO THE MAIN HOLDING. HERD NEGATIVE STATUS IS SUSPENDED UNTIL THE TEST RESULTS RETURN.**
- THERE ARE NOW ONLY 3 ELIGIBLE CHECK TEST METHODS;
  - TEST 10 UNVACCINATED CALVES FOR ANTIBODY IN EACH SEPARATELY MANAGED GROUP AGED 6-18 MONTHS (SEASONAL CALVING HERDS ONLY REQUIRE 5 BETWEEN 9-18MONTHS)
  - INDIVIDUALLY TEST ALL CALVES BORN IN PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS (BLOOD/TISSUE TAG)
  - INDIVIDUALLY TEST WHOLE HERD (BLOOD/TISSUE TAG)

### DAIRY

- MILK SAMPLES ARE NO LONGER AN APPROPRIATE TESTING METHOD UNLESS ADVISED BY VET
- NEGATIVE HERDS MUST COMPLETE A CHECK TEST EVERY 6 MONTHS (Using options 1, 2 or 3)
- NOT NEGATIVE HERDS CAN ONLY USE CHECK TEST OPTIONS 2 OR 3

### BEEF

- NEGATIVE HERDS MUST COMPLETE A CHECK TEST EVERY 12 MONTHS (Using options 1, 2 or 3)
- NOT NEGATIVE HERDS CAN ONLY USE CHECK TEST OPTIONS 2 OR 3

### REMEMBER

- ANIMALS ONLY REQUIRE TESTED NEGATIVE FOR VIRUS ONCE IN THEIR LIFETIME
- A MIN OF 12 MONTHS MUST PASS **FROM PI REMOVAL** BEFORE A NEGATIVE STATUS IS POSSIBLE, REMOVE PI'S IMMEDIATELY!
- DO NOT HOLD ONTO PI'S, THEY WILL CONSTANTLY CHALLENGE THE REST OF HERD REDUCING GROWTH & PERFORMANCE!**
- PI'S ARE THE RESULT OF INFECTION IN EARLY PREGNANCY, PROTECT STOCK BY VACCINATING ALL BREEDING HERD PRIOR TO BULLING (INCL. THE BULL), BULLING HEIFERS ARE MOST AT RISK AS THEY ARE LIKELY TO BE COMPLETELY NAIVE TO THE VIRUS!**
- DAMS OF CALVES THAT TEST VIRUS/ANTIGEN NEGATIVE AUTOMATICALLY GO TO 'ASSUMED NEGATIVE' AND CAN BE MOVED
- BOUGHT IN ANIMALS FROM UNKNOWN STATUS HERDS e.g. ENGLAND, SHOULD BE ISOLATED AND MUST BE TESTED NEGATIVE WITHIN 14 DAYS OF MOVEMENT ONTO A HOLDING, **NEGATIVE HOLDINGS STATUS IS SUSPENDED UNTIL RESULTS ARRIVE!**

TO CHECK THE STATUS OF A HOLDING OR IF AN ANIMAL HAS A NEGATIVE STATUS PRE- MOVEMENT, GO TO;

**WWW.SCOTEID.COM**

THIS IS SIMPLE TO USE & YOU CAN LOOK UP ANY ANIMAL OR HOLDING WHERE YOU KNOW ITS FULL NUMBER



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