



# Farm news

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## Calf Feeding *Best Practice*

Over 50% of calf rearing costs are due to feed, however this is an area that shouldn't be scrimped on. As investing in quality Calf Milk Replacer (CMR) will pay off in terms of age at first calving and future yield.

Saleable Whole Milk (WM) is still a viable choice for calves but is not necessarily a cheaper option. Unpasteurised whole milk can pose a risk to the calf in the form of bacterial contamination including E. coli, Salmonella and Campylobacter as well as Johne's disease. Antibiotic (waste) milk should never be fed to replacement heifers because of the effect on the protective gut bacteria and the proven increased risk of antibiotic resistance.

**Consistency** is extremely important when it comes to feeding baby calves. Whether you choose to feed whole milk or CMR, it should be warmed to 40-42°C before feeding. Feeding at the same time of day is also important. Calves should be fed at least twice a day; three times or *ad lib* is even better.

**Feeding Heifer Calves for Accelerated Growth to calve down at 24 months.** A sensible target for the pre-weaning period should be to double the birth body weight in the first 2 months of life. The aim should be to get calves up to 900g of Calf Milk Replacer (CMR) per day as quickly as possible after their colostrum, and then to tail off towards weaning at around 8 weeks. If making up the CMR by hand, this means 150g/850ml water to make up a litre of milk. Calves should be fed 6 litres per day at this 15% inclusion rate. Note that with automatic calf feeding machines, the powder is added to a litre so it is important to up the powder inclusion rate accordingly. Calves should also eat 1.5kg/day of concentrate feed in the week before they are weaned. Water should be available from birth to ensure good feed intakes and to promote rumen development.

### Whole Milk

#### Pros

- 100% dairy protein
- Rich in fat therefore high in energy
- Contains immunoglobulins not present in milk replacers

#### Cons

- Can be a carrier of disease from cow to calf (vertical transmission)
- Contains pathogens (particularly raw waste milk, but also pasteurised milk)
- Transmission of Johne's disease
- Low in certain vitamins and trace elements
- Can contain antibiotic traces contributing to resistance
- High fat content can actually cause scouring and can impede rumen development after weaning

### Calf Milk Replacer (CMR)

#### Pros

- Has a constant composition
- Is processed to minimise contamination and disease transition
- The composition is tailored to the nutrition program and calf's needs
- Easy to verify DM and feed amount
- Can be used to achieve accelerated growth when associated with an appropriate feed rate

#### Cons

- Is less digestible when the formulation is high in vegetable protein
- Lower quality CMRs can have low stability, causing scouring
- Less reputable suppliers may use degraded or damaged milk ingredients

Adapted from [lifestart.nutreco.com](http://lifestart.nutreco.com)

For more information call our practice on **01332 294929** or email [farmandequine@scarsdalevets.com](mailto:farmandequine@scarsdalevets.com)

**ScarsdaleVets** Farm

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# Sterilium Scrub

Chantal Bryant BVM&S BSc MRCVS

You may have noticed that we have altered our surgical scrub technique to using Sterilium (an alcohol-based surgical grade disinfectant) instead of Iodine or Hibiscrub.

This is the WHO (World Health Organisation) standard for medical practice but is also standard in our small animal hospital. The reason for the change is that there is known bacterial resistance to Hibiscrub and Iodine, particularly E. coli, and they also don't cover many viruses or fungi. Hibiscrub can cause skin problems – some people are allergic, with anaphylaxis being reported in some cases and it is also quite damaging to the epidermis, so the vet's hands become more prone to harbouring bacteria. We carried out a fun test in the practice to compare various products before and after scrubbing their hands and we think the results speak for themselves!



**Note:** both the antibacterial soap and Iodine plates appeared to get worse after using them. Further investigation revealed that these were from bottles designed for single use that had been refilled several times and so we have adjusted our protocols.

## Upcoming Farm Events

### Mastering Medicine Courses

Don't forget that our courses will be running on the first Thursday of every month up until August for Dairy, Beef and Sheep clients.

### Lambing Courses - £75 (inc. VAT)

Areas that will be covered include:

- Repositioning incorrectly presented lambs
- Injecting and stomach tubing lambs
- Treating ewe diseases associated with lambing
- How to use a head rope

Our lambing courses are back for 2020!

Tues 24 March  
Two courses  
10am and 2pm

Wed 25 March  
Two courses  
10am and 2pm

### Alpaca Birthing Course – £150 (+VAT)

The course will cover:

- Preparation for unpacking
- Reproductive emergencies in the dam and cria
- How to deal with post-unpacking problems
- How to use a head rope

Wed 25 March  
10am to 3pm

Mon 30 March  
10am to 3pm

Please call 01332 294929 for more information on our Farm events or to book your place.



## Managing the Downer Cow

Larissa Rapp MRCVS

**Downer cows can be stressful and time consuming to manage.**

In an ideal world, preventing downer cows in the first place should be the priority but if you do get one, it is important to decide quickly what the treatment should be and also when to call it a day if it isn't going to improve. It is usually the secondary damage, which happens as a result of them going down, that determines how they will go on rather than the primary reason. That said, it is important to try and get a correct diagnosis early on – so often we are called out to a milk fever which turns out to be toxic mastitis or some other condition. If a cow hasn't responded to calcium treatment within 2-4 hours, it probably isn't milk fever. If in doubt, call us out!

Much of the secondary damage can be prevented by quality nursing care so it is this rather than the initial treatment that has the biggest effect on survival.

Secondary damage includes:

- 1. Compartment syndrome (also known as muscle damage) caused by pressure on the muscles of the hindlimb** – we can assess the level of this damage by taking a blood sample. If the results come back over the threshold, the cow is unlikely to get up.
- 2. Nerve damage** – both hindlimb and forelimb nerves can become damaged. Cows that get stuck on their side (lateral recumbency) particularly on a hard surface can damage the radial nerve (forelimb). Cows that 'crawl' or get stuck with their legs out behind (frog-leg position) can damage the femoral nerve (hindlimb).
- 3. Dislocated hip** – cows that are down can be prone to dislocating their hip, this would obviously require euthanasia.

### Nursing Care

Downer cows should be regularly assessed (every 4-6 hours) so they need to be moved to an appropriate shed where they will get looked at frequently. Regular turning/lifting should also be carried out at this time. Lying on a hard surface will rapidly lead to secondary damage – ideally, they should be on a deep straw bed or sand of approximately 30-40cm depth. To prevent 'crawling', cows should be kept in a reasonably confined space. Food and water should be in easy reach for the entire time a cow is down. NSAIDs (pain-relief) should be given for every case – products containing Ketoprofen have a very short meat withhold period when given intravenously so this should be the first choice.

If a cow fails to respond at all to treatment or appears to go downhill in spite of treatment, she should be euthanised or re-examined by a vet.

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