

Farm news

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Colostrum is Gold Here's 5 Top Tips

1. First feed is the best feed

Antibodies from colostrum are absorbed across the gut for only the first 12 hours of life. But as soon as feed enters the gut, the gut pores start to close off, preventing further absorption. If the first feed is just a few mouthfuls, or worse yet a mouthful of bedding and muck, the total antibody absorption will be much less even if you top them up later. **Therefore, the first feed a newborn gets needs to be the best.**

Minimum amounts in the first 12 hours:

Calves: 100ml per kg – 40kg calf needs 4L (1-2 feeds)

Lambs: 200ml per kg – 5kg lamb needs 1L (4 feeds)

Kids: 100ml per kg – 5kg kid needs 500ml (2 feeds)

Piglets: 150ml per kg – 1.5kg piglet needs 225ml (2 feeds)

Cria: 100ml per kg – 6kg Cria needs 600ml (2 feeds)

2. Hygiene is critical

Unlike in humans, antibodies don't cross the placenta before birth, meaning newborn farm animals have weaker immune systems than human babies! Therefore, the environment they're born into needs to be as clean as possible. Think of feeding equipment like sterilising babies' bottles – clean after each feed with disinfectant and hot water, rinse before use and store clean and dry. This includes feeding tubes, bottles, teats, buckets and whisks. On dairy farms, parlour wash water can be used. Check inside teats as milk can accumulate in the very tip and around seals. Replace chewed or damaged teats and ensure water buckets are also clean and topped up regularly.



3. Check the quality

Heifers and high yielding cows tend to produce poorer quality colostrum, and antibody concentration naturally varies between individuals. Colostrum density, and therefore how much antibody it contains, can be measured easily using either a Brix Refractometer (over 22 is good) or with floating Colostrum Balls (at least 1 green ball floating). Ask your vet to show you how to do this. Poorer quality colostrum can be used for second and subsequent feeds as there is a lot of benefit to the gut to continue feeding colostrum and first milk, even after the antibodies are no longer absorbed. Good quality colostrum can also be stored.



4. Feed it or store it

Colostrum should never be left in buckets around the parlour or dairy. Any bacteria in there will double every 20 minutes, meaning you could be feeding an infectious cocktail! A pasteuriser can help to remove harmful bacteria, as well as reduce the risk of Johne's disease, but cannot improve quality or completely overcome high contamination. Colostrum should be either fed immediately to the calf, sealed in clean containers in the fridge for later the same day, or frozen for future use. Freezer bags are a great way to store colostrum as they can be laid flat and stacked to maximise space, can be labelled with cow number, date and quality and are quicker to thaw when needed. Frozen colostrum can be thawed and used for up to 6 months. Plan ahead for night births and heifers, and thaw at the first signs of labour to ensure a good first feed. Use a bucket of warm water, not boiling, and NOT in the microwave! There are good substitutes in an emergency, but none compare to the real thing.



5. Keep calm!

Studies show that antibody absorption and health in the first few days is better in young animals that are handled calmly and quietly. If you can feed within the first hour of birth, most will willingly drink their allotted amount of colostrum from a teat as the instinct to feed is so strong. This is a good opportunity to check and dress the navel too. If you need to tube feed, ensure that the animal is restrained gently and that you take your time. Make sure tube feeders are in good condition and that you are comfortable and confident in their use. We are happy to give a demonstration if needed and advise on products to suit your needs.

Ensuring newborns get the best start in life takes time, patience and attention to detail, but good antibody absorption massively reduces the chance of disease in the first few weeks, so it's worth getting it right. Please speak to one of our vets if you are interested in help to assess colostrum quality, storage, bacteriology, pasteurisation and feeding.

For more information call our practice on **01332 294929** or email farmandequine@scarsdalevets.com

Scarsdale Vets
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scarsdalevets.com

Shaping the future: AHDB

In April this year, AHDB levy payers will be able to have their say and influence the work AHDB does across the beef, lamb, dairy, pork and cereals and oilseed sectors. Levy payers will also be able to voice what they think are the major challenges across the industry.

AHDB has looked at what they believe is important to levy payers and will be asking questions about whether this is the right focus. For beef and lamb, this includes the work that goes into protecting the reputation of the industry by marketing the benefits to consumers at home and abroad through our 'We Eat Balanced' campaign, exports work, or the work that helps you build on the already strong environmental credentials of beef and lamb in the UK. There's the technical advice and guidance shared through manuals, tools and at events, including the Strategic and Monitor Farms, and the work on disease prevention, including BVDFree, tackling one of the biggest disease issues facing the cattle industry today, costing UK farmers in total between £25-£61m per year.



AHDB's genetic improvement work provides an important way for producers to lift the productivity and profitability of their livestock enterprises. Genetic gain within the UK is currently worth £10.7m to the sheep industry and £4.9m per annum to the beef industry, with much of this work underpinned by AHDB's programme of research, delivery and knowledge exchange. AHDB also provides daily market prices and analysis of what's on the horizon and what consumers are thinking and spending their money on.

Please register for your chance to shape the future of AHDB at www.ahdb.org.uk/shape-the-future. Registration should take no more than five minutes and needs to be completed by 31 March. You will then be contacted to vote from 11 April. Voting will be open for four weeks.

Medicine Matters

The last few bottles of Spectam Scour Halt to grace our shelves will probably have all gone by the time you read this, and at the moment it looks unlikely that this product will come back on to the market.

Spectam is (was!) the only licensed oral antibiotic for the prevention of watery mouth in neonatal lambs, although many flocks have made significant progress in reducing their use of oral antibiotics in lambs through hygiene, provision of colostrum and good ewe nutrition. If you do need any advice about treatment or prevention of watery mouth, please do give us a call.

The rest of this month's offering is more to do with the collection of medicines than the drugs themselves, but I thought it was relevant enough to slot in here. It's come to my attention that there have been issues for a few of you with some overzealous parking charges at our Stapenhill branch, which many of you use as a collection point. I'm sorry about this, because having been on the receiving end of several annoyingly non-negotiable fines for (in my view) extremely minor parking infringements, I understand the frustration.

The car park at Stapenhill is a public car park, keenly watched over by an external parking company. If you need to park there, and don't wish to incur a charge and a stern letter, all you need to do is enter your car registration into one of two tablets inside the surgery (one's in reception, and the other's just inside the window). If you do receive a fine, please don't worry – just give the Stapenhill branch a ring and they'll cancel it for you.

Carolyn Baguley

MA VetMB CertAVP (Cattle) MRCVS

Lambing Kits

£70*

Save over 30% compared to buying these items individually! Our kit contains:

- 2 VetLube bottles
- Rectal gloves
- Digital thermometer
- Dip cup (for navels)
- 10% Iodine 500ml bottle
- 'Ewe Go' drench 1L
- Lambing ropes
- Lamb stomach tube
- 1 Volostrum sachet
- 1 50ml glucose 50%
- 1 Virkon sachet
- 1 RedStart tube
- 1 Selekt Restore sachet
- 1 free beanie and pen (while stocks last!)
- All presented in a handy storage tray (recycled plastic)

*Inc VAT

Essential Needle Kit

Save 50% compared to buying the items individually!

£5*

- 10 5ml syringes
- 10 18g 1" needles
- 10 10ml syringes
- 10 16g 1" needles

*Inc VAT

Farm and Equine Centre
Markeaton Lane, Markeaton, Derby DE22 4NH
01332 294929

Alfreton
01332 304900

Pride Veterinary Centre
01332 678333

Allestree
01332 554422

Shelton Lock
01332 700321

Hilton
01283 732999

Stapenhill
01283 568162

Langley Mill
01773 304914

Stretton
01283 565333

Mickleover
01332 518585

Wollaton
01159 676586

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