

## Coronavirus Update

Needless to say we are in unprecedented times and we all need to play our part keeping each other healthy, but also continuing to produce the food the country needs. To maintain this production, we will continue to provide as close to the normal service as possible, however some jobs not deemed essential should be avoided and so may be postponed until a later date. For all the below work we will continue to provide, we ask that you maintain a 2m gap whilst we work (that's about the length of a cow). We will also be asking a few questions when you book calls in, for our vets and your own safety.

### Work considered essential for continued food production:

- Fertility visits
- Parturition, Caesareans and Prolapses
- Outbreaks of disease amongst a group
- Acutely sick animals
- TB testing

\*Other work may be considered on a case by case basis. Feel free to speak to one of the vets or anyone in the office if you're not sure.

Please try to order drugs well in advance as our deliveries have also been affected, meaning we can't guarantee next day arrival of our orders. We also can't take cash payments due to the risk involved, so card over the phone or bank transfer is the preferred way please. Again, please bear with us as we perfect this new way of working.

## Product Update

We still have a few products on the shelf replacing the old-faithfuls due to supply issues. If you aren't sure what we've dispensed, please just ask – we can also write the usual name you recognise on the box, so anyone working on the farm can see what each product is, if that makes things easier.

There are also a couple of changes with a few products meaning that **withdrawal periods have changed**. Please pay close attention to the withdrawal on the box/bottle to make sure you aren't getting the timing wrong.

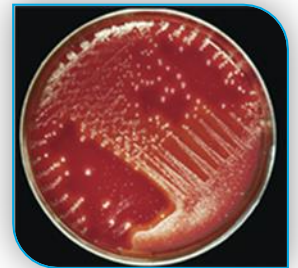
We also have plenty of stock of the very popular and high-quality **lamb colostrum** we introduced last year for those who need it at this busy time of year.

If you have any questions or concerns, just ask!

## Mastitis

We still have issues with supply of several the intramammary tubes available on the market. As product choice is limited, we want to make sure you are using the most suitable one. Now is the ideal time to have a review of what causes mastitis on your farm. We can send milk samples for culture and can include testing for antibiotic sensitivity where required. This lets us know which bugs are present on-farm and tailor your treatment choices more accurately.

We also advise using an anti-inflammatory for cases of mastitis. There is significant inflammation within the udder when an infection is present and can make the cow quite unwell. Anti-inflammatories help to reduce this inflammation and speed up the cow's recovery.



## Top Tips for Calving in Dairy and Beef Herds

A little bit of preparation can make calving as low-stress as possible and protect your investment, whether that be the new calf crop or the next lactation. There are improvements that nearly all systems can make, and to suit all budgets – such as adding a calving yoke and gate, creating a dedicated washing area, or even installing cameras! However, the biggest and most important tip is to **plan ahead!**

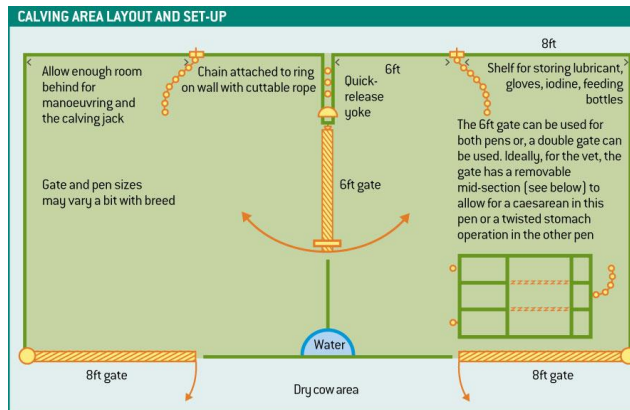
**Know your calving dates** – For seasonal beef herds a well-defined and short (60-90 days) calving season is best for improved health, ease of management, production and potential for financial return. For dairy herds, accurate calving dates reduce the risk of bulk tank failures as well as being important in reaching production potential. Arranging with the vet to PD the cows at between 4-12 weeks gestation will allow the most accurate dates to be given.

**Equipment at the ready** – have calving equipment to hand near the calving pen, including the calving jack, soft clean leg ropes, a head rope, arm-length gloves, obstetrical lubricant, iodine, and the vet's phone number! Check your calving jack is in good working order and cleaned after every use. Ropes should be cleaned of gross debris, left in disinfectant for 10-15 minutes then allowed to dry thoroughly.

Ensure you also have equipment ready for the calves, such as colostrum replacer, a jug, feeding tubes (one for healthy calves and a separate one for sick calves), feeding bottles, and ear tags and taggers at the ready. Colostrum is liquid gold when it comes to controlling many calf diseases; where several staff are involved in calving and calf care, it can be useful to print and laminate colostrum protocols and put them up near the calving pens. Johnes' control must be considered when freezing spare colostrum (or sourcing from other farms) in both beef and dairy herds – speak to your vet for advice if you're unsure.

*Continued overleaf....*

**Calving set up** – The calving pen should allow the cow to be easily and safely restrained, with plenty of room to manoeuvre the jack behind. Safety for both the herdsman and the cow should be a priority. Specifically designed crushes are available for livelier suckler cows (don't attempt calving in a standard crush unless the cow is too aggressive to restrain in any other way), but a gate and yoke system can be created for dairy cows and quiet beef cows. The design below is an example:



Design by Richard Davies, Fenton Vets

Having a short gate with a long chain will fit most sizes of cow and prevent the cow from going too far forwards. The yoke should go all the way to the floor to prevent the cow from choking if she goes down.

Other considerations are adequate lighting and access to clean and ideally hot water. Having hot water to hand makes it easier to keep ropes and equipment clean, and is far nicer to wash your hands with in the depths of winter!

Some people see a benefit from installing cameras or calving sensors that can be monitored remotely (usually on a smart phone), in reducing workload and even calf mortality.

**Cow nutrition** – Difficult calvings are often caused by the cow being over- (or under-) conditioned. Body condition score cows and heifers regularly so that the diet can be adjusted appropriately - beef and dairy cows should not change in body condition by more than 1 point (on a 5 point scale) during a production cycle. Dramatic changes in diet should be avoided, particularly in the last trimester – severely restricting the feed of over-conditioned cows just before they calve will do more harm than good; it's far better to prevent them from becoming over-conditioned in the first place! Dry cow nutrition is very important in preventing post-parturient diseases such as milk fever, ketosis (slow fever) and displaced abomasum (twisted stomach) in dairy cattle. Speak to your vet for more detailed advice on nutrition and transition management.

There is some evidence that feeding at night instead of the morning (throughout the calving period and probably for a couple of weeks before) increases the number of calves born during daylight hours.

**Health and hygiene** – Hygiene is the most important factor in preventing calf disease. Calving pens must be clean, and easy to clean out and disinfect between each use. Diseases can also build up on pastures, and pasture-rotation systems can be used for those calving outside. Ensure your hands and clothes are clean, or wear clean gloves, when assisting with calving. Vaccines are available to give to cows before calving to reduce the incidence of calf scour due to E coli, rotavirus and coronavirus. Vaccination against other diseases present on the farm, for example BVD, will also have a positive impact on calf health. Dairy farms must take Johne's disease control measures into consideration, though this is also important in beef herds.

**Decision making** – It's important to know the normal calving process: Stage 1 is dilation of the cervix and may take 3-6 hours (heifers taking longer than cows). The cow will separate herself from the group, alternate standing and lying, and a thick string of mucous is usually seen hanging from the vulva. Stage 2 is the expulsion of the calf and can take from a few minutes to several hours. The start of stage 2 usually coincides with the rupture of the water bag. Progress should be visible every 15-20 minutes. Stage 3 is the expulsion of the foetal membranes (cleansing) and should happen within 2-3 hours after the delivery of the calf.

Difficult calvings can be caused by oversized calves, malpresentations (leg back, etc), uterine torsions (twisted calf bed), twins or ringwomb. Traction should never be attempted through a ringwomb, uncorrected torsion or with the calf in an incorrect position (correct is both front legs and the head when forwards, or both back legs when backwards). When two feet are presented, it can be difficult to determine whether the calf is coming backwards, or forwards with the head back. Remember that the hock and the elbow feel the same inside the cow, but the front leg has two bendable joints in front of the elbow (the fetlock and the carpus), which both bend in the same direction. The back leg only has the fetlock before the hock, both bending in opposite directions.

Ensure you are clean and apply lots of lubricant to yourself, the calf and the inside of the vagina before any intervention. Placing a head rope in addition to the leg ropes can be very useful and handed to an assistant to maintain the correct position of the head. If no progression is seen, then traction should be abandoned, and the vet called to perform a caesarean. In a normal 'forwards' presentation, it is unlikely that the calf will be safely delivered if the head will not enter the pelvis before traction is applied, or the front feet are crossed over – call for veterinary assistance in these circumstances.

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