



New Treatment Strategies for Calf Scours: Antibiotic Alternatives

As of January 1st 2017, in order to feed antibiotics to your young stock a VFD (veterinary feed directive) must be obtained from your herd veterinarian. In our dairy practice, there are really only two instances where antibiotics could be fed for treatment purposes. The first is the use of oxytetracycline/neomycin (for example "Save-A-Calf") for calf scours. The second is the once common practice of feeding chlortetracycline (Aureomycin) to weaning pens that are experiencing respiratory disease. Recent research has shown that management plays a key role in the prevention of both calf scours and pneumonia to the point that medicated feed or medicated milk may not be warranted or even therapeutic.

Simple calf scours is a good example of a disease where antibiotics are probably not required for a successful outcome. In most cases, calves that are scouring at 5-14 days of age are infected with either rotavirus, coronavirus or cryptosporidium or a combination of all three. E. coli bacteria will always be cultured from scouring calves and depending on the specific strain, may or may not be significant. Regardless of the cause, calves that are standing and still possess a suckle reflex will benefit greatly from oral electrolyte therapy. Alternating between milk and oral electrolytes such as "Hydra-Lyte", feed 1-1.5 quarts 5 to 6 times per day. Smaller meals throughout the day help to address the calves inability to absorb and digest large volumes of fluid. Treating with oral electrolytes is critical as scouring calves quickly become dehydrated and acidotic.

Believe it or not, scouring calves are actually lactose intolerant. Their intestinal villi needed to digest lactose (milk sugar) have been damaged by the offending virus or bacteria resulting in an osmotic diarrhea. In order for calves to once again digest lactose while their intestinal villi are healing a single "Lactaid" lactase enzyme pill can be added to milk feedings. "Lactaid" can be purchased at the clinic or at your local pharmacy without a prescription. Discontinue use once the stool has returned to normal consistency.

Feeding 3-4 ounces (1 ounce equals 30cc) of colostrum daily for up to 10 days of age may also help decrease the scours severity. Even though calves lose their ability to absorb colostrum antibodies after 12-24 hours of life, local immunoglobulin retained in the intestine has shown to be beneficial. (Stan Morczek) Clean colostrum may be stored in the refrigerator for up to 5 days while frozen colostrum may be kept for one year. Ice cube trays make an easy way to freeze small portions of colostrum. Each calf would receive 3-4 colostrum ice cubes with each feeding for 10 days.

Calves that are down, unable to rise and suckle require immediate attention. These calves are severely dehydrated and acidotic. Treatment requires intravenous electrolytes, sodium bicarbonate and may include systemic antibiotics as these calves are often septicemic.

Over →

Treatment Guidelines for Calf Scours:

1. Feed small meals 5-6 times per day alternating between milk and oral electrolytes.
2. Add one "Lactaid" pill with each milk feeding.

3. Feed 3-4 ounces colostrum daily for 10 days.
4. Treat early at the first signs of lethargy, in appetite and loose stools.

Calf scours is a common condition treated on most dairies. Antibiotics are usually not required for a positive resolution. A conversation with your veterinarian regarding case identification, possible pathogens involved, prevention strategies and treatment options is well worth having.

Mark your calendars!

Relay for Life Auction – FRIDAY May 12th

beginning at 6:00 p.m. at the Pavilion at the Lewis County Fairgrounds. Food concessions open at 5:00 p.m. Come out and get some great bargains. All money raised goes to American Cancer Society.



Are your pets up to date on their rabies vaccines?

If not, now is the time to vaccinate them. All pets must be vaccinated, even if indoor pet. If an unvaccinated pet bites- it must be confined for 10 days in an approved kennel/shelter at owners expense. All animals need 2 shots- one year apart, then every 3 years. Lewis County Public Health along with Countryside Veterinary Clinic are holding several rabies clinics throughout the month of May for Dogs, Cats, and Ferrets 3 months of age or older. The clinics are as follows:



- Monday - May 8th Constableville Fire Hall 7 - 8 pm**
- Wednesday – May 10th Copenhagen Fire Hall 7 – 8 pm**
- Thursday – May 11th Osceola Town Barn 7 – 8 pm**
- Monday - May 15th Lyons Falls Fire Hall 7 – 8:30 pm**
- Wednesday - May 17th Harrisville Fire Hall 7 – 8 pm**
- Thursday - May 18th New Bremen Fire Hall 7 – 8 pm**
- Wednesday - May 24th Lowville Town Barn 7 – 8:30 pm**

Please have all dogs on a leash and cats & ferrets in a carrier or strong pillowcase/sack. Please provide a record of previous vaccination. \$10 donation suggested.

Read our newsletters: Remember that if you spot your name in our newsletter and call us within 5 days of the billing date, we will give you a \$10.00 credit on your bill.