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Practice News

March has been seasonally busy with the usual rush of obstetrical issues. During the month we attended 19 calvings and 15 caesars, whilst Ed now holds the practice record for a single week managing 8 whilst on call!



Elsewhere calf scours have been causing issues on some units with Cryptosporidium and Rotavirus being the most common diagnoses. An alternative to Halocur is now available so prompt diagnosis and early intervention is recommended. Samples handed into the practice can be tested here giving a same day result.

Some of the recent drug shortages have eased with the arrival of imported Local Anaesthetic along with a number of hitherto out of stock vaccines.

Early Nematodirus Warning

For those that lamb early, the good weather during March may come as a mixed blessing. It is likely that Nematodirus will be an earlier and more significant problem this year. Indeed, colleagues not much further south have already been seeing cases. April lambers should not be complacent either as problems may not be too far away.

If you have lambs that are at least 6 weeks old, they are potentially at risk. This risk is increased if they are grazing pastures that were grazed by lambs the previous year and if the fields they are on are south facing.

Treatment of choice remains a “white” wormer drench. Treatment should always be followed up with a bulk worm egg count 2-3 weeks later to ensure further treatment is not required.

For further information and accurate forecasting, check out www.scops.org.uk



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Calf viability, colostrum intake and immunoglobulin status

We are often asked to look at calves a day or two old, apparently that had 'no reason' to be unwell. Usually when we blood test them we find that there has been a failure to absorb colostrum. This can be due to a failure to suckle, inadequate or poor colostrum quality, delayed (more than 6 hours old) intake of colostrum or acidosis after a difficult calving also impairs the absorption of immunoglobulins, meaning that calves may have suboptimal antibody levels despite the administration of a sufficient volume of good quality colostrum.

The focus on colostrum quality and amount fed is vital for spring calving sucklers. Calving ease and duration are significant factors. Calf vigour post-calving can impact on the basics: It increases time to standing and reduces the suck reflex, making it less likely that the calf will suck unaided. It is important to assess the degree of acidosis in the newborn calf, as it can occur with slow calvings, which may go undetected, as well as with difficult calvings.

Clinical signs of acidosis can include:

- An increased time to sternal recumbency (sitting up), with times over 15 minutes carrying a poor prognosis for survival.
- Poor or absent suck reflex.
- Haemorrhages in or around the eyes.
- A lack of muscle tone and reflexes.
- Meconium staining (yellow discolouration to coat and fluids).

Acidosis can be in part corrected with intravenous administration of Bicarbonate injection. A recent study looked at the impact of an assisted calving on the calf's ability to ingest sufficient colostrum and found:

COWS WITH NO ASSISTANCE AT CALVING

- PLUS GOOD CALF SUCK REFLEX = 8% failed to ingest colostrum
- PLUS POOR CALF SUCK REFLEX = 78% failed to ingest colostrum

COWS WITH MODERATE ASSISTANCE AT CALVING

- PLUS GOOD CALF SUCK REFLEX = 26% failed to ingest colostrum
- PLUS POOR CALF SUCK REFLEX = 94% failed to ingest colostrum

COWS REQUIRING SIGNIFICANT ASSISTANCE AT CALVING

- PLUS GOOD CALF SUCK REFLEX = 49% failed to ingest colostrum
- PLUS POOR CALF SUCK REFLEX = 98% failed to ingest colostrum

