

Clean Pastures Reduce Death Loss From Calf Scours

SPRINGFIELD, MO.

Reducing death losses from calf scours may be as simple as moving to clean pastures before calving, says Gary Naylor, a livestock specialist with University of Missouri Extension.

“Death losses occur more frequently in the first three weeks of a calf’s life and calf scours account for the major portion of the losses,” said Naylor. “The best way to prevent an outbreak is to move cows close to calving to clean pastures.”

According to Naylor, dirty, contaminated lots become incubation places for various kinds of bacteria and viruses. The infectious agents contaminate the udder and teats of mother cows.

New calves nurse their mothers, and the race is on for infections to occur.

“Providing adequate nutrition to beef cows in late gestation is also an important scour prevention tool,” said Naylor. “The quality and quantity of colostrum milk is affected negatively by inadequate protein and energy. Thin cows are more likely to produce weak calves, and they don’t receive enough immunity from their mother’s milk.”

Calves must receive the antibodies early in life for them to be effective in preventing calf scours.

Naylor recommends making sure that calves

nurse within two hours of birth to receive the best immunity from colostrum.

“When scour outbreaks occur, the treatment is similar whether it’s caused by a virus or bacteria. Dehydration, electrolyte loss and acidosis have to be controlled by administering fluids orally early in the course of the disease,” said Naylor.

In severe situations, calves may have to be removed from the cow and fluids administered by IV injection.

“Antibiotics should be administered both orally and by injection for four days. Certain antibiotics work better with specific types of scours. A veterinarian can run antibiotic sensitivities to determine which drugs will best treat certain situations,” said Naylor.

Vaccinating the cow herd can also be an effective means of prevention in herds where scours have been a serious problem. The vaccination should be tailored for a particular problem to be effective.

“Veterinarians and diagnostic laboratories are integral components in designing a vaccination program,” said Naylor. “There are also products that can be administered shortly after birth to help build disease resistance. These products are helpful in severe outbreaks when there’s not enough time to vaccinate the cows.” Δ



Link Directly To: **BRANDT**



Link Directly To: **SYNGENTA**