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for your animal's life!



for your herd's health

12 Normanby St, Warragul, 3820 Phone: 5623 2525

Spring Issue

**Better care for
downer cows
yields greatly
improved
recovery rates**

**Better growth
rates for
calves without
hay or straw**

**Improving the
survival rate of
newborn
calves by
dosing with
colostrum**

There is rarely a "big bang" which delivers businesses amazing success. For dairy farmers and vets alike, often success is about working on the percentages and depends on lots of little improvements. Even 0.1% of an improvement here and there can make a big difference in the long run.

So this newsletter focuses of three areas where you can make those little improvements.

Better care for "downer cows" yields success:

New research had shown a remarkable improvement in recovery rates for downer cows. Once a cow has been down for 24 hours, it is an unfortunate fact that recovery rates are very low - often less that 10%. This is not a good statistic.

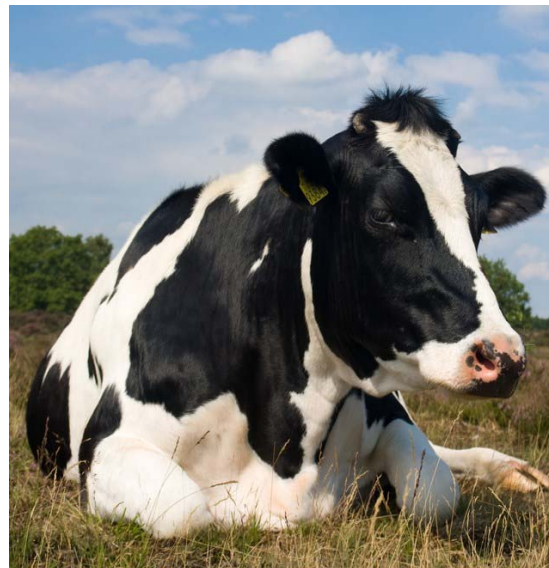
The term "downer cow" usually refers to late pregnant or early calving cows either lying on their chest or on their side and unable to get up and walk.

A time period of "down for 24 hours" separates simple cases of milk fever from the more complicated cases of downers.

Finding the cow, treating her with intravenous calcium and waiting for a response soon sorts out those cases of milk fever. Downers are an emergency. Without good nursing, secondary damage occurs rapidly

that dramatically lowers the chance of recovery.

Why is the success rate so poor for cows that have been down for longer than 24 hours? Irrespective of the initial cause, remaining in the down position for any period of time starves the big leg muscles of oxygen, leading to muscle decay, loss of leg power, and weakness. The cow stays down! And the longer she is down, the worse the outlook.



In addition, lying on hard surfaces further damages the leg muscles and causes bruising. Lying in cold, wet, exposed conditions or in the hot sun adds further stresses the animal.

Recent South Gippsland research has found if a cow is moved into a shed on soft

bedding - say 20 cm of sawdust or soft old hay improves recovery rates from 10% to 40%.

The key message is this: shelter and soft bedding eliminates those negative factors (above).

Further valuable information on managing and nursing can be found at www.dairyaustralia.com.au/Animals-feed-and-environment/Animal-welfare/Cow-welfare/Managing-downer-cows.aspx

Better growth rates for young calves fed without hay or straw

We have been encouraging farmers to prevent 0 to 4 week old calves from eating hay or straw.

Now an article in the latest edition of The Australian Dairy Farmer has graphic evidence of why this recommendation is so important (p103, Sept-Oct 2013).

Rapid rumen development depends on the highest quality nutrition - milk and high quality calf pellets. Conversely poor quality fodders - hay and straw - delay development and stunt growth rates.

Some calves seem to become addicted to fodder and develop small mature rumens at the expense of milk and grain intake. *Poorer growth rates are the result.* Even calves that are not addicted will have suboptimal growth rates.

In addition, hay or straw is inevitably spilt from feeders, and is mixed with bedding. Calves are exploratory young animals, and eat some of the spilt fodder. If there are any viruses, bacteria or parasites in the environment that cause calf scours, bugs build up rapidly to a point where their immune systems are overwhelmed and an outbreak of calf scours develops.

The ideal bedding is sawdust. Rice hulls are acceptable (but are occasionally eaten). Wood chips are OK but not as insulating or as comfortable.

Our strongest advice is to leave that tasty hay or straw to older animals - preferably 8 weeks of age.



Improved survival rates of newborn calves

Recent research in the Western District has shown that quick removal of calves from the calving area, and immediate dosing with colostrum improves survival rates.

Leaving calves in the calving area or calving pad increases the risk of picking up bugs that cause scours from areas highly contaminated with manure or residues of it.

Calves that have had a drink from their mothers get a further 2 litres of colostrums at removal, and calves that may not have had a drink get 2 x 2 litres of colostrums 12 hours apart.

Here's the really important point: the colostrum MUST be "first strippings" - harvested from cows' first milking of the new lactation. So you need two banks of colostrums - one for the first strippings (given to the newborns), and one for milkings 2 to 8 given to calves after they have had their dose or doses of first strippings.

Ring Rod, Sherri or Matt for further details.

Devoted vets - giving all our patients, large and small, the best and most comprehensive options in animal health care and well-being.

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Phone: 03-5623 2525 Fax: 03-5623 2892

Email: info@devotedvets.com.au Website: www.devotedvets.com.au

Clinic Hours

Monday and Thursday: 8am to 7 pm

Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday: 8am to 5pm

Saturday: 9am to 12 noon