SAC CONSULTING

Treating Scour In Autumn Born Calves

Scour occurs due to failure of the intestines to absorb fluids. The calf rapidly dehydrates and if not treated promptly and correctly can cause death.

The main infectious causes of scour in calves up to three weeks of age are E. coli, Salmonella, Rotavirus, Coronavirus, and Cryptosporidium. Early diagnosis is important so that the correct treatment is administered, the correct preventative measures are put in place and that zoonotic diseases (those that can also infect humans) are identified. Collect a scour sample into a sterile container and submit to your vet or local lab for testing. Always wear gloves as some of these causes can infect humans.

- Isolate a souring calf with its dam in a dry, well-bedded corner of a pen. Separating the calf from its dam adds another layer of stress to both the cow and the calf.

- Give 1-2 litres of oral electrolyte 4 to 8 times daily. A stomach tube feeder can be used the first time. Contact your vet if the calf will not suck fluids through a teat 2 to 4 hours later. This could indicate the calf is deteriorating and it might require intravenous fluids. Checking if a calf will suck a teat is a good way to check that the calf is not deteriorating.

- Once the calf is improving, alternate milk (access to the cow) and electrolyte solution every two to four hours is beneficial as there is considerably more energy and protein in milk which can help with recovery

- Antibiotics do not work against Cryptosporidium, Rotavirus and Coronavirus. Antibiotics (by injection) may be of benefit when the calf looks very sick, has a temperature above 39.5 degrees Celsius, or test results show the cause to be bacterial. Discuss this with your vet.

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