The VALE VETERINARY GROUP

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Happy New Year! **January 2011**

SW Healthy Livestock Project: Respiratory Disease Module

Many of you may be aware of the Healthy livestock Project, and its aim to target specific problems within the dairy, beef and sheep sectors with 70% funding towards group and individual training and farm planning. The Vale farm vets team have started to role out several aspects of this; Mastitis and Lameness modules for the dairy industry, BVD and Johne's Control for the dairy and beef sectors; and we are now able to offer the respiratory disease module to beef enterprises. The sheep specific modules are expected to be rolled out by Duchy College in the spring.

The Respiratory module is aimed specifically at beef enterprises and aims to reduce the incidence and impact of pneumonia on production by reducing the susceptibility of stock to disease and reducing the level of disease and respiratory challenge on farm. Calf rearers, finishers and suckler herds can all benefit from reducing the incidence of respiratory problems in their youngstock.

The project consists of a 2 hour group meeting covering the causes and effects of respiratory disease, not only viruses and bacteria but a look at the affect of environment and the place of vaccination in a control scheme. This is followed by a farm visit where the buildings and sheds can be checked, stock examined and then any recommendations can be made, with the emphasis being on finding achievable solutions to problems – not just recommending a new shed!

Air flow, air quality and moisture management have a huge effect on the ability of the calf to resist disease and small changes to manage these can reap rewards in reduced disease, reduced treatment costs, reduced labour, increased feed conversion and ultimately increased profit.

The project will finish with a visit to a local farm where some small changes have made an impact, and indeed one of the big benefits of talking a pneumonia problem through this project is the sharing of ideas and experiences possible in a group situation.

If you would like to take advantage of this funding to improve farm profits, please contact the surgery.

Lameness, Mastitis BVD and Johnes.

We have had a lot of interest in these strands of the Healthy Livestock Project. If you were at Mole Valley on the night of the meeting in December(!), and/or missed the last newsletter with all the details, please let us know. We aim to start these projects in the New Year. Don't miss out!!

The Vale Veterinary Centre, Honiton.

The builders are hard at work converting the new Honiton premises into the latest veterinary centre.

The facilities will include 3 consulting rooms, and operating facilities for small animals including diagnostic imaging (xray and ultrasound). The practice will be open every day between 8.30 am and 6 pm.

But as important to us all is the farm animal side. Farm clients will be able to collect medicines from the Honiton branch, which will be fully stocked to supply all your needs! The computer system will be linked to the Cullompton network, so your records will transfer across. There will

also be a daily medicines drop from the wholesaler. Medicines may be ordered through Cullompton or direct from Honiton. Please remember they will still need to be authorised by a vet, but we hope that this will significantly improve the service offered to clients in the area.

The new site is on the Heathfield Industrial Estate in Duchy Road, and will be opening in Mid-March.

Who said giving milk to scouring calves was going to make it worse?

Well in the past pretty much everybody has said giving milk to scouring calves will make them worse. But times are changing, people are realising that milk has many benefits; certainly human paediatricians make sure babies get milk. This article aims to explain why people stopped giving milk to scouring calves and outlines the benefits of milk and how to combine these benefits with oral rehydration products.

The obvious question to ask is: "Does giving milk combined with oral rehydration products make the scouring worse?" Here we have to look back at how oral rehydration products came into existence. They were developed to help treat children in third world countries dying from dysentery. The World Health Organisation realised by sending out sacks of salt and bicarbonate this could be mixed with boiled water and given to these sick children. Giving oral fluids, electrolytes and preventing acidosis undoubtedly saved many lives. Animal health companies then realised that calves died of scour too and that producing similar powders could be commercially attractive and save calf lives. But when the powders were given with milk, although survival rates may have improved, the scour worsened. To remain commercially attractive something had to be done. What was the difference between calves and the children? Well the children were not getting milk. The decision was made to recommend stopping milk!

The practice continued for the next 20 years before someone asked the next logical question: "Why does adding oral rehydration products to milk make the scour worse?" Here the answer lies in the bicarbonate or high levels of citrate. These are put in the solutions to correct acidosis, something scouring calves can die from even if the fluid and electrolyte levels are corrected. Bicarbonate and citrate prevent milk from clotting –add them to milk and the scour will appear worse as it cannot clot.

But milk is a good thing. Calves with diarrhoea can digest milk, indeed it helps healing of the intestinal wall. Milk also provides maximum energy. Work from Canadian feedlot stations showed when using milk based oral rehydration products calves gained weight even with severe diarrhoea. Even high energy water based products can only provide 50% of the calf's energy requirements yet this can be met with only 3 litres of milk. Milk contains a variety of natural enzymes (lactoferrines, lactoperoxidases and lysozymes) which are potent antimicrobials. Most importantly calves crave milk and in beef suckler systems using milk compatible oral rehydration products (such as Rehydion® gel) means there is no need for calf-dam separation.

"How do milk compatible products work?" Well, as with any oral rehydration product they must provide electrolytes and reduce acidosis, but they must do this without using bicarbonate or lots of citrate. Typically milk compatible products use propionate and acetate rather than bicarbonate. Propionate and acetate help reduce acidosis and are among the most powerful substances to stimulate water and sodium absorption through the intestine. As they do not raise the abomasal pH in the way bicarbonate does they are not increasing the risk of growth of diarrhoea-causing bacteria (like E. coli and Salmonella) within the gut.

Milk compatible oral rehydration products can be given in milk from buckets or via a stomach tube. Rehydion® gel can also be given neat or drenched in a low volume of water to beef suckler calves provided they are well enough to be sucking.

In summary, milk is good for scouring calves providing clotting is not inhibited by the oral rehydration products. Milk compatible oral rehydration products are used in babies, routinely used in Canada on massive feedlot enterprises and are becoming the market leading products on the continent. They have a big advantage on beef suckler farms as the cow and calf do not have to be separated.