



SEPT 2020 DAIRY NEWSLETTER

Dear Food Animal Clients,

As the number of veterinary clinics servicing food animals decreases, our practice area continues to grow. In an attempt to optimize our efficiency on the road, we are offering **a call fee discount** for non-urgent cases **called in between 8am and 10am Monday to Friday**. This is the same discount you currently receive for any pre-scheduled herd health / appointment. Thank you for letting us care for your livestock!

Making Calf Health a Priority

Everyone knows that calves and heifers represent the future of a dairy. For this reason, every possible effort is made to ensure that the calves we raise today will have the genetics, health and production we want in our cows for tomorrow. Despite this importance, achieving success in calf management continues to pose many challenges to producers. Not achieving passive transfer, high rates of scours and pneumonia, and high mortality rates are still common problems across Canadian dairies. But what about the farms that don't know how they stack up against the average for these important parameters? This is where a monitoring program can shine. The Kirkton Vet Clinic is providing a calf health monitoring program to shine a light on calf health and help answer the question "how are we doing?"

Each farm enrolled in the calf program will receive weekly visits to collect blood from any newborn calf. From this sample it can be determined whether or not the calf received enough high quality colostrum in a timely manner. If calves score > 5.5 g/dL they are said to have passed, or achieved passive transfer. Since pre-weaning mortality rates and future milk production can both be linked to passive transfer rates, this is the absolute pillar of calf health. Calves are dehorned, health events are recorded and average daily gain is calculated. All of this data speaks to the strength of the farms colostrum program, pre-weaning disease and treatment rates, and growth and efficiency of heifers. Additionally, we use a luminometer to measure bacterial contamination and validate washing protocols; ensuring that feeding instruments are properly cleaned and disinfected. All of this information is gathered and reported in bi-monthly reports, and calves on the program can be tagged, dehorned, vaccinated and measured for only \$25/calf enrolled.

One of our enrolled herds was experiencing high rates of sickness and mortality. Once we confirmed that they had high levels of passive transfer we looked to the environment. We tested their bottles and instruments and found them to be over 300X the upper tolerated limit for bacterial contamination. After making the appropriate changes to their washing protocols, we have helped the farm lower the morbidity and mortality rates of their calves.



While every farm is different, the one thing that should remain constant is the desire to raise the healthiest calf possible. To improve your odds of reaching this goal, you have to know with confidence that your calves are checking all the boxes for maximized health. Whether you are experiencing high rates of calf mortality, or simply don't know where your calves rank, there is big value in making calf health a priority. Additionally, as the traceability component of Pro-Action becomes mandatory in Sept 2021, on farm records, tagging and treatment history becomes that much more important. Your herd health veterinarian will be reaching out to talk about your calves and the Kirkton Calf Program in the next few weeks!

We now carry Truvitalyte Max!

This high quality electrolyte provides calves with the necessary buffers to correct acid base imbalances, prebiotic substances to help re-establish the proper microflora of intestines, and added vitamins B,C and E to boost immune function.



On Farm Euthanasia

An unpleasant reality is that if you have livestock you have deadstock. This is why CQM requires every dairy producer to have a euthanasia standard operating procedure (SOP) that was written specific to their farm. This protocol will be dependent on whether they use a firearm, or call the vet to euthanize the injured or gravely ill cow. Many of our clients have expressed safety concerns with having a gun on farm with young children, or multiple employees, while waiting for a vet is also not always possible or in the best interest of the animal. A viable alternative is to purchase a captive bolt gun which is relatively inexpensive, does not require a licence, and requires assembly in order for it to be fired.

For any method of euthanasia, landmarks and animal restraint are the two most critical details. For shooting a cow with a gun or captive bolt, the same landmark is used. You draw a line from the outside of the eyes to the opposite horns and you place your captive bolt on the intersection of the lines created. Using a livestock marker to draw the 'X' will help give you confidence that you have the right spot. It is relatively high up on the head, and NOT between the eyes. Once you shoot or deploy your captive bolt gun you must confirm that the animal is unconscious. While uncontrolled paddling is common, they should not blink, try to correct their position, or vocalize. If they do any of these behaviours they are not unconscious and require another shot. A captive bolt shot is then followed by a secondary method to stop the animal's heart. Please ask your herd health veterinarian for the best steps and protocol for using a captive bolt gun and contact the clinic if you would like to order one.

