

## APRIL 2002 LARGE ANIMAL NEWSLETTER

**SPRING MEETING:** A priority on every dairy is the **breeding program** for cows and heifers. Certainly the subject gets enough attention lately in the various magazines we all receive. On April 11<sup>th</sup> we will be hosting a meeting on the subject. The meeting is sponsored by Merial, the company who markets Cystorelin® (GnRH). Dr. Paul Fricke from the Univ. of Wisconsin Madison, Dairy Science Department, has been involved in the development and evaluation of the various programs being recommended today. He can walk us through not only how to run breeding options, but why they work in terms we all can understand.

We find these meetings are good casual opportunities for lots of questions and answers. We hope to see you April 11<sup>th</sup> at the Sportsman's Club in Granton. The meeting will begin at 8:00 P.M.

**CALF SCOURS:** Winter is nearing an end, and as usual calf diarrhea was at its usual higher seasonal incidence. Let's review what contributes to higher levels of calf scours; higher exposure levels to scours causing organisms and/or lower levels of protection in the calf.

Winter is a time where calving areas are always more concentrated. Certainly calves are not being born out on grass. Rather the cows due to calve are housed in a confined area for the duration of the winter. **Confinement always will mean higher levels of viruses and bacteria in the environment**, thus more scours. Calving pens and calf housing are harder to clean in the winter. Water with disinfectant really cannot be used, and those areas certainly do not dry when the weather is cold.

**High animal numbers in an area contaminate an area worse.** The more animals going through the areas used for calving and housing, the worse will be the problem. Grouping calves under 14 days of age certainly also intensifies a problem. If one calf scours, you can bet that most of the group will scour because of the way they suck on each other, insuring exposure to the scours organisms.

Time spent by the calf with her mother can add to the problem. **The longer that calf is with her dam and in that pen, the more likely it will be exposed to scours bugs.** Under ideal circumstances the calf is removed from her dam immediately after calving, even before she is licked off. Yes, you do need a way to dry off the calf. However getting that calf away from her mother quickly in winter is best.

Of course we cannot ignore the **colostrum feeding** issue. Do what you have to with respect to vaccinating the cow with ScourGuard 3(k)/C® appropriately to improve colostrum quality. However, we have to remember that time is of the essence for colostrum milking and feeding. That cow really should be milked within 4 hours of calving to insure that she maintains good colostrum quality. That equipment used to milk the cow must be clean! The longer you delay milking, the weaker the colostrum will be. Feed the calf immediately after milking the cow. That calf's ability to absorb antibodies is also getting weaker as time passes. Get a gallon into that calf as soon as possible.

**If you are addressing all of these areas and still having a problem**, we may have to do some investigation. Let's test some 1-4 day old calves to actually evaluate colostrum absorption and blood antibody levels. Let's submit some calf diarrhea from an acutely affected untreated calf to find the bug causing the problem (the first day that calf scours!).

Under most circumstances there is no NEW bug. It is usually the same bugs we always see. However this year for some reason the exposure levels have built up, and until spring comes it is tough to get the area really cleaned up to lower those levels? Maybe someone new is caring for calves and there is a breakdown in colostrum feeding? **Until we conduct some investigation we are only guessing.**

**GVS STAFF**

Mike Strobush DVM

Kevin Ratka DVM

Jeannette Bymers Off Mgr

Danae Volovsek CVT

Al Harmening DVM

Jean Liljegren DVM

Tammy Zickert Recpt

Jennifer Cornwell CVT

Jeff Engrav DVM

Sabine Hartmann DVM

Wendy Lindner CVT

Yolandi Boon VA