

Causes of calf scour

- **Nutritional** - Any sudden change in diet or pattern of feeding can cause nutritional scours. In young calves this tends to occur when milk has been withheld for longer than usual or if creep feeds are phased in too aggressively.
- **Viral scours** - Rotavirus and coronavirus are present in nearly all herds. With poor colostrum intake and/or heavy environmental contamination, calves tend to scour at 4-21 days.
- **Cryptosporidia** is a protozoan parasite, it is the second most common cause of scours in calves 4-21 days old. **Cocci** is also a parasite but effects older calves. Hygiene is especially important as the dose is low and they last a long time in the environment.
- **E coli** - A few strains (e.g. K99) are pathogenic and will cause acute disease in the first days of life. These bacteria may or may not cause scour but are often fatal.

Treatments

Dehydration and acidosis are the main cause of death.

- **Giving oral fluids is key**, a minimum of 8L should be administered daily, to prevent dehydration. This should be offered in nipple drinkers, but often require tubing.
- **Keeping on milk** is important as the gut heals from the nutrients within the gut, most electrolyte replacers do not offer enough glucose to achieve this. We suggest adding Rehydrion Gel to the milk to aid this twice a day.
- **Additional electrolyte** two feeds will be required to achieve to target 8L. We suggest that Lectade Plus should be used for these two feeds.
- **Antibiotics** are rarely needed as many of the causes are not bacterial. Oral antibiotics such as boluses, empty the gut of all bacteria good and bad and are linked to causing resistance. If the calf is unwilling to suck, has a high temperature (over 40) or blood is present in the faeces then injectable antibiotics are required, such as Norodine.
- **Specific treatments** are available for Crypto and Cocci if these parasites are found on the farm.
- **Vaccinations** are available for the viral causes of scour, these are given to dry cows.

Prevention of calf scours

Ensuring calves get good quality colostrum within 4hrs, to try to ensure immune transfer.

Disinfection of calving and calf pens is important. Cryptosporidia and coccidia are resistant to most disinfectants (Kilcox only proven spray against cocci) and try to rest the clean pen for at least 7 days. Prompt navel dipping with 10% iodine at birth will also help.