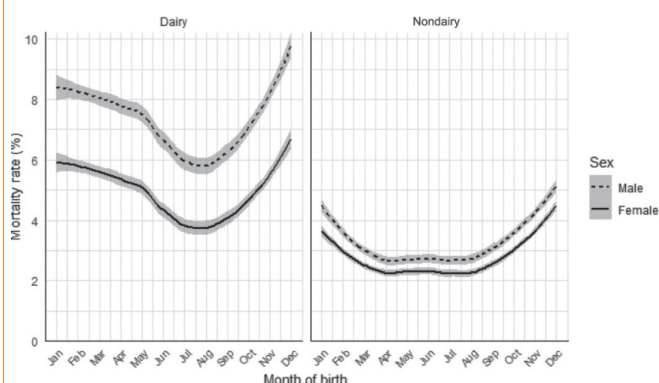


We have been very fortunate with a dry autumn so far, with many cows still out. However this dry weather has brought with it a large variation in day and night temperatures and many still days. Both of which can be a challenge to calf health. We quickly turn to pneumonia being the cause of deaths and disease in winter however scours cases also increase.



Calves need energy

New born calves use their own energy to keep warm when temperatures get below 15 degrees, (this varies slightly with breed) meaning that they have less energy for growth and their immune system which is so vital at this age. If we can provide calves with more energy they will have more chance of beating disease challenges quicker with less deaths and higher weight gain. This extra energy is best provided by increasing milk or milk replacer feeding. Work suggested that during winter feeding rates should increase by at least 5%. I suggest feeding a powder at 150g/L and 8L/d equated to 1.2kg/day.

<https://ahdb.org.uk/calf-milk-replacer-energy-calculator>

What about heaters?


Heaters can be another way of adding energy into the calf environment. Infra-red Heaters - ones commonly used as patio heaters - can be an efficient way of increasing bedding temperature without the waste and losses of warming the air. These can come in strips or individual bulbs and focusing them on calves 0-2 weeks of age would be the best option. Always ensure they are put up properly and safely to prevent the risk of fire. Research is being carried out in this area but initial data shows that heaters can have a direct impact on improving growth rates.



(Courtesy of Hoard's Dairyman)

Calf coats

These preserve the heat that the calves are producing themselves. These have greatly increased in popularity over recent years. Ensuring that you wash and dry them properly at 60 degrees between every calf is important or that can become a way of spreading disease and making the disease challenge worse not better.



UNITED KINGDOM - CHINA - MALAYSIA

Instructions

Specification of the Milk Replacer Fed

Assumed moisture content	0
Crude Protein	22
Crude Fat	17
Crude Ash	7.6
Crude Fibre	0
Calculated Lactose	53.4

Amount of Milk Replacer Fed

Volume of Milk Replacer	8 Litres
Concentration of Milk Replacer	150 g/L
Total amount of solids	1200 grams

Metabolisable Energy

MJ per kg of milk replacer	18.6
MJ per litre of milk replacer	2.8
Total Metabolisable Energy Fed	22.3

Concentrate Feeding

Amount of concentrate eaten per head per day	5 g
ME of concentrate eaten	12 MJ/kg
ME from concentrate fed	0.06

Calf Information

Age of Calf (days)	14
Weight of Calf (kg)	45
Desired growth rate (kg/d)	0.9
Required Energy (MJ/d)	19.31

Environmental Impact

Environmental Temperature	8 °C
if <3 weeks old	1.37 MJ/d
if ≥3 weeks old	0.39 MJ/d

Feeding Required to achieve desired growth rates

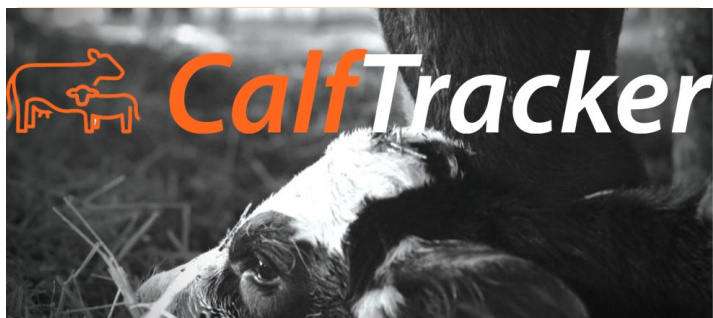
Total energy required	20.67 MJ/d
Energy from fed concentrate	0.06 MJ/d
Energy required from milk replacer	20.61 MJ/d
Total amount of solids to be fed	1110 grams/d
Amount of milk replacer to be fed to achieve desired growth rate	7.4 L/d

Theoretical growth rates achievable on current feeding regime

Energy provided from milk replacer	22.3 MJ/d
Energy provided from concentrates	0.06 MJ/d
Impact of cold	1.37 MJ/d
Total Energy Provided	21.0 MJ/d
Theoretical growth rate	1.00 kg/d

Extra energy required for cold stress

Energy required for different growth rates



How we can help?

There are many and varied ways to improve calf health especially over these difficult winter months. However, having some data to work from and to find out actually where the weak spot is can be a great place to start.

We are now using **Calf Tracker**, a piece of software that will store and assess many aspects of calf health, meaning we can then discuss the findings with yourselves and see where we would like to make changes and areas we are already doing well in.

The software works from growth rates, treatment records, deaths and calf total protein bloods results to assess colostrum management. This data can be collected by yourselves and sent in or we can come out and take the measurements for you.

Below is an example herd and these graph can tell us so much. The blue bars show how the growth rates alter with the seasons. As expected the lowest growth rates are over the winter. It also highlights pneumonia is the farm's biggest disease concern again and is worst over winter.

The software is originally designed for dairies and collecting data on heifer replacements, however which such an importance on beef calves and there impact on cash flow the same principles can easily be applied. As for the calf rearer system, because you can set your own targets the system can be adapted to individual needs. It can be altered so there is no need for the colostrum management aspects as these are not in your control if buying calves in. This software is suited to all that think calves are important to their business.

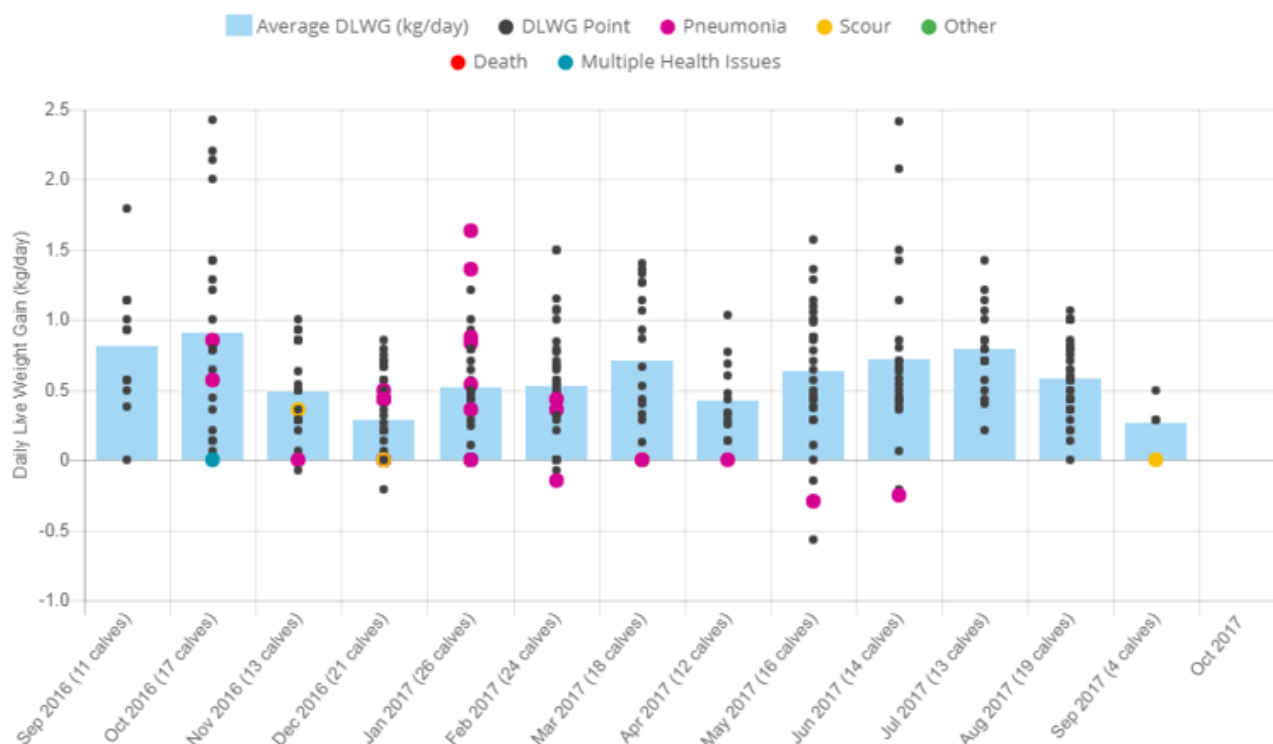
Over time this can build up a really detailed picture and is a great way of seeing if the changes you make are having an effect. If you are interested in this please let us know and we can come out and discuss the options with you further.

Kathryn Hart
BVSc BSc Cert AVP (Cattle)
MRCVS



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Cultivate

Continued Professional Development

Practical on-farm learning for a sustainable future

Cultivate CPD has been created to meet the demand we have seen from within the veterinary and farming industries for quality training, provided by companies and people who are actually implementing the things they teach on a day-to-day basis. The George Farm Vets has a long and successful history of practical education. Cultivate CPD also allows us to make the most of the skills we have within our team and to positively affect the health and welfare of the animals by improving the skills of the vets and farmers looking after them.

Cultivate CPD hosted its first course recently on sustainability which attracted Vets from across the country. Kat and Ed led both a morning session on the principles before taking the Vets out on farm in the afternoon to apply their learning from the morning.

Our Vet-led courses will be aimed at providing events and on-farm learning for Vets, farmers and all allied professionals. Future courses will be advertised at CultivateCPD.co.uk



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