

Colostrum is Gold

- I'm back!

Spring is in the air (positive thinking!)

Suckler herds are calving and most of our sheep flocks are preparing for lambing (except for those keen ones that have finished already!). While a high percentage of our dairies calve all year round, this can often be a challenging time for youngstock.



Well, I'm back, after what I think you can all agree has been one of the weirdest years on record. 2020 brought many ups and downs. I started the year with the arrival of Percy, and then soon after the country was locked down. I've managed to keep myself busy and we are now tenants on an 80-acre mixed farm near Berkeley, where we have started calving our Angus herd, and lambing is soon on the horizon. I will now be getting back out on farm, mainly for youngstock visits, so please tell me if you want me to come and have a look. However, a greater amount of my time will be spent doing farmer training and mentoring along with carrying out research and larger projects.

I am still as passionate as ever with all things calf orientated, and it is great to see the recent dairy benchmarking we have been doing. Using calves less than 1 week old, we have collected blood samples to measure success of colostrum management. The overall results show an improvement over time, in what is now the

fourth year we have carried this testing out. This sampling can be done for beef calves and lambs if you are interested in how your colostrum is affecting your youngstock.

With the ever-increasing pressure to reduce antibiotic use - whether that be from legislation, red tractor, us vets or your milk/meat buyer - ensuring good colostrum management is key.

Getting an appropriate amount of clean, high quality colostrum into the calf in good time, will increase its defences against all bugs and give it the best start. It contains lots of good fats to give the calf plenty of energy, as well as proteins for growth and in these cold snaps the ever important but very simple warmth. It has even been shown to carry natural growth regulators that alter the guts ability to absorb nutrients. As well as altering the natural biome of "good bacteria" in the gut, allowing a better food conversion and digestion.

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For lambs, poor colostrum is often linked to watery mouth outbreaks. Previously oral antibiotics would be prescribed as a preventative; however, resistance is now common to the regularly used antibiotics. Unfortunately, many of the powdered colostrum replacements are poor quality so if you think you are facing a problem please get us involved early.

In the beef and dairy herd, poor colostrum is often linked to scour. Rota and Corona virus (yes, a totally different corona virus!) are on all farms and the key is to give the calves the best chance of fighting them with good hygiene and colostrum. Vaccinations can be given to the cows

before calving to prime and increase these antibodies in the colostrum she makes.

To assess colostrum in more detail we can break it down into the 4 Qs of colostrum.

1. QUANTITY

Ensuring we give enough colostrum is key. We aim for a target of 10% of body weight within the first 6 hours. This can be given in a number of smaller feeds if wanted and via a tube or nipple drinker. This does not affect the absorption of this first feed.

2. QUALITY

Checking that the colostrum you are giving, and certainly if you are storing it, is good enough is important. This can be done easily using a brix refractometer; here we aim for over 22%.

3. QUICKLY

As soon as the calf or lamb hits the floor the ability of the gut to allow to antibodies to cross into the blood stream is limited. At birth it will be able to absorb 40% of what you give it whereas by 24 hours this is less than 5%.

4. QUIETLY

Trying to tube calves when you are not used to it and the calf is struggling or the mum is agitated can be difficult. Ensuring you stay calm and have what ever you need will help, as does lots of practice. There are many different tubes on the market - ensure you like yours and it's easy to clean or is replaced regularly. Our dispensary can help as we sell a small range of different tubes.

5. sQueaky CLEAN

Ensuring we are not feeding this vulnerable baby a "bacteria soup" is important. Bacteria love colostrum as it is high in sugars and fats. If it is left at room temperature their numbers can double every 20 minutes! When harvesting colostrum, clean the udder and bucket; even more vital is the vessel you will be storing it in. Ensure it has a lid, can be placed in the fridge and that it is used within 3 days or frozen and kept up to 6m. If frozen, ensure cow number, date and Brix result are written on the bag and try to freeze it in small volumes or with a high surface area to volume ratio so it defrosts quickly.

Farmer meetings and training

THIS YEAR, EVEN WITH LOCKDOWN STILL UPON US, WE HAVE DECIDED TO RESTART FARMER MEETINGS. HOWEVER, FOR THE SHORT TERM AT LEAST, THESE WILL BE VIRTUAL USING ZOOM.

SHEEP - HAVE YOUR TUPS BEEN WORKING
FEB 4TH 7.30 ZOOM

BEEF - ANNUALLY BENCHMARKING REVIEW OF 2020
FEB 11TH 7.30 ZOOM

PLEASE LET ME OR THE OFFICE KNOW IF YOU ARE INTERESTED SO WE CAN SEND YOU SOME MORE INFORMATION.

WE WILL BE CONTINUING TO RUN MEDICINE COURSES ONLINE, SO PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOU ARE INTERESTED OR REQUIRE ONE FOR YOUR RED TRACTOR ASSESSMENTS.

PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

After assessing many colostrum replacers, I believe this one is the best. It is suited to lambs and calves. Please ask dispensary or me if you would like any other details or to buy some!



The George Vet Group is about to embark on "Every Mile Matters!" This will be to continue our support for Action for Pulmonary Fibrosis in Tim's memory, and we are aiming to cover 1000 miles between us from the 13th to 21st of February using whatever means of exercise we can (run/bike/swim/roller-skates/row/pogo stick etc.). If you would like to join in or support with a donation the link is

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/everymitematters>

Hope you all have a good calving and lambing period, please get in touch if there is anything we can help you with.

KAT

