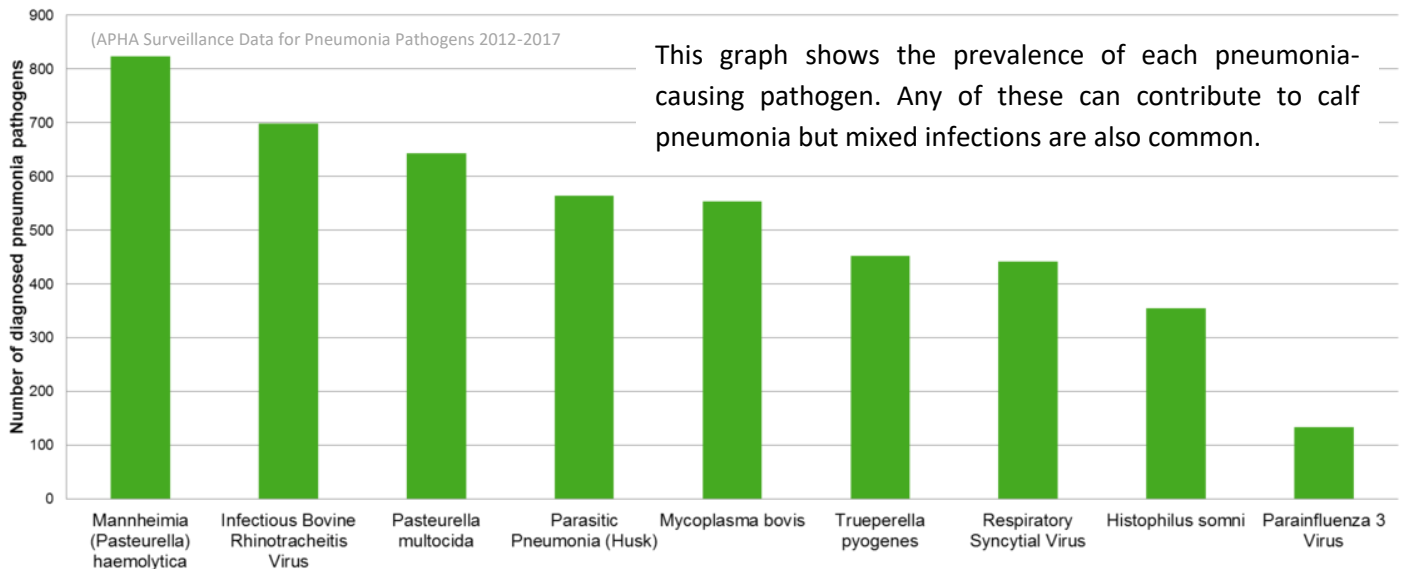




February 2020

Calf pneumonia or Bovine Respiratory Disease (BRD) is the most common reason for poor performance and death in growing calves. Any level of impaired respiratory health can impact a calf for its entire life leading to reduced growth rates, later finishing times and lower milk yields. Combined with increased feed requirements and veterinary attention, the impact pneumonia can have on profitability is often significant.



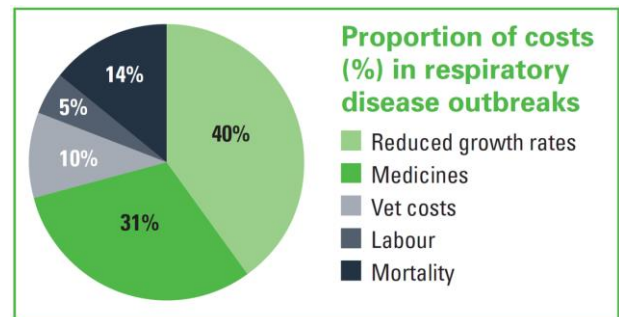
This graph shows the prevalence of each pneumonia-causing pathogen. Any of these can contribute to calf pneumonia but mixed infections are also common.

BRD is a complex and multifactorial disease. Even with strict hygiene control disease can still occur as some of these BRD causing pathogens live in the calf's respiratory tract. Environmental or management factors can cause stress and lead to a calf becoming immunocompromised, resulting in the usually friendly residents of their respiratory tract becoming pathogenic and causing pneumonia.

Often when we get called to see cases of pneumonia various risk factors are highlighted as major contributors to the outbreak:

- Sick animals not being isolated
- Mixing different age groups of calves
- Transport stress
- Sudden changes in diet (e.g. weaning)
- Poor ventilation or exposure to draughts
- Overstocking
- Extremes of temperature
- Poor hygiene/drainage
- Poor access to feed, inadequate amount of feed or sudden changes in feed composition (including weaning)
- No use of NSAIDs (e.g. Metacam) following routine procedures like disbudding
- Too many interventions at once i.e. weaning at the same time as disbudding causing stress

Cost



Studies have shown that BRD is responsible for around **14.5%** of dairy heifers failing to reach their first lactation.

Cost per case: minimum of **£43.25** per sick calf with an added cost of **£29.58** per calf for the rest of the in-contact group.

Daily live weight gains where **0.8kg/day** can drop to **0.4kg/day** and crucially may never recover completely increasing lifetime costs and reducing efficiency of production.

Dairy heifers have an average reduction in first lactation milk production of **150kg**, a **30 day increase** in time to first calving and reduction of bodyweight at **14 months of 29kg**

Prevention (always better than cure!)

Identifying what specific risk factors may be contributing to pneumonia issues on farm is crucial when forming a prevention plan. Using a calf health checklist (available for both dairy and suckler farms) to guide you through this process can be invaluable. Often there are only a few changes required that can have a dramatic effect to reduce disease.

Vaccination can sometimes play a role in dealing with disease on farm. In some cases, studies have shown that vaccinated dairy heifers **weigh over 45kg more** than unvaccinated heifers at 8 months. Using your vet to help choose the right vaccine for your herd is important, as selecting the right vaccine to protect the correct age calves against specific pathogens is critical.

Antibiotics

The farming industry is under huge pressure to reduce antibiotic usage, as you all know. Annual Antibiotic Reviews are now an important part of Red Tractor and we often identify high levels of injectable usage coming from calf pneumonia treatments. With this in mind, and the often high prices of the antibiotics used to treat pneumonia, there is a real incentive to reduce usage in this area.

As Kat discussed in her newsletter in November 2019, there are products available like Solacyl which contain no antibiotic. Solacyl is a Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory (NSAID) and when used correctly as part of your pneumonia control plan, evidence has shown an average drop in antibiotic usage of **43%** in the face of an outbreak.

Long-term Plans

Dealing with BRD is not an easy fix and due to the fairly seasonal nature of the disease it is often forgotten as conditions improve and calf health recovers, but as discussed the initial costs of treatment are only one part of the picture and the subsequent loss of production over an animal's lifetime is significant and costly.

So next time you call us out to jab a few calves that are coughing or if we're on farm for anything else make sure a conversation is had on what plans could be made to help going forward.

TBAS

Many of you will have heard of the TB Advisory Service, a free resource available to any farm where the aim is to sit down and have a conversation about your specific situation regarding TB and come up with a reasonable plan to help reduce your herd's risk going forward.

The visit takes about 2 hours and involves going through a detailed questionnaire usually followed by a farm walk.

If you are interested in a TBAS visit, please ring into the office to book.

MEETINGS



Youngstock Convention 2020

Following last year's hugely successful event we hope to bring together people from all parts of the industry to discuss a wide range of topics from nutrition to preventative health with our new panel of guest speakers.

Thursday 5th March at the De Vere Tortworth Court, GL12 8HH from 10am to 4pm

If you have any queries, or to book tickets, either ring into the office or look for the youngstock convention page on our website.

<https://www.georgevetgroup.co.uk/farm-vets/young-stock-convention-2020/>

All the best,

Ben

