

Hello and welcome to the June Newsletter – this month, the practice is 7 years old!

May was an excellent growing month, many of your crops are looking fabulous. Long may it last.

We have been receiving a lot of information about Bluetongue as the midge season returns. There is now a vaccine available against BTV-3 – on the continent. It is not available in the UK but we are still benefiting from it as our near continental neighbours are using it, and hopefully reducing the potential numbers of infected midges that may be blown over to us. At least over here on the west side of the UK we should have fair warning if/when it makes it to our shores. There is much more information, including the symptoms, on these websites, follow the links - <https://ruminanthw.org.uk/bluetongue-virus> and <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bluetongue> It looks like quite a debilitating disease.

You probably also noticed a recent case of BSE reported in Ayrshire, which was picked up by routine surveillance. The disease cannot be transmitted directly animal to animal but rather via a common source – the cohort and offspring of the infected animal have been traced, isolated and will be culled. Hopefully it is a sporadic case, none of us want to see that disease again.

Mary

Calf Rearing

After going on a CPD course recently, Sarah's feeling all inspired about improving calf health for bucket-reared calves through their housing and feeding. She'd love to share with you some gems of information here, based on the latest research and evidence.

Step 1: Choosing Milk Replacement Powders

There are so many to choose from! Where should you start? In general, try and get as close to "real" whole milk as you can – more dairy-based ingredients and fewer plant ingredients. In numbers, a good powder looks like:

- At least 22% protein, preferably skim or whey
- At least 20% fat
- Less than 7.5% ash (this is usually mostly salt, which can cause scours)
- Less than 0.05% crude fibre (this reflects levels of plant protein, which young calves can't digest well)

Calves older than 2-3 weeks are better at digesting plant protein like soy/egg and fats like coconut, so this might be a cost-saving option for some dairy-beef systems that buy in older calves.

Continued PTO



Directors:

Mary Walters

Rhian Matthew-Davies

Morgan Hanks



South Wales Farm Vets

Ty Newydd

Groes Faen

CF72 8NE

Tel; 01443 223751

Step 2: How Much?

There is a breadth of evidence now showing that the “feed efficiency” (conversion of kg fed into kg growth) across a calf’s lifetime is highest when they’re in the milk-fed stage – so this is not the time to cut costs. For replacement dairy heifers, the rate of milk feeding also affects which genes are “turned on” in early life – so increased milk feeding is associated with higher yields once they’re in the milking herd. To work out feeding rates, you need to consider both how much the calf needs for **maintenance** (energy spent on movement, keeping warm, digesting etc) before it’s got any energy left for **growth**.

For the average dairy calf up to 5 weeks old, you want to aim at feeding 1kg of milk powder per day. In warm temperatures (17-22°C), about 380g per day will be used up for “maintenance”. The remaining will be used for growth – remember that this pool will be reduced in cold weather, so you should try and increase their feeding rates accordingly.

Step 3: Rumen Development

Although it may seem a long way off, you need to think about getting calves ready for solid feed and ruminating right from day one. The ideal is to have fresh, ad lib calf concentrates plus chopped straw on offer from birth. Hay is not so good at stimulating the surface of the rumen to grow its rough papillae, and calves may over-fill their stomachs with it before they’ve developed enough to empty it out.

Don’t forget that water is also very important for rumen development and growth rate (as the rumen microbes rely on it). Warming the water up during cold weather will also increase starter intake.

Step 4: Weaning Strategies

Our aim here is to maintain growth and avoid disease. With the level of feeding suggested above the latest evidence supports “Step Weaning” whereby calves’ milk feeding is reduced abruptly at 5 weeks old and stopped abruptly at 8 weeks old (see below). This is supposed to be best for encouraging rumen development and concentrate intakes (1kg daily at 5 weeks, increasing to 3kg daily at 8 weeks).

Disclaimers! Beware that you shouldn’t “step down” the milk unless the calves are eating these minimum levels of concentrate. At high levels of milk feeding like this, you need to be careful to avoid rumen drinking – where milk overflows from the abomasum. Feeding at the higher concentration of 150g/L will help to reduce volumes (don’t feed more than 5% bodyweight per feed), and using slow feeding teats e.g. peach teats will also help.

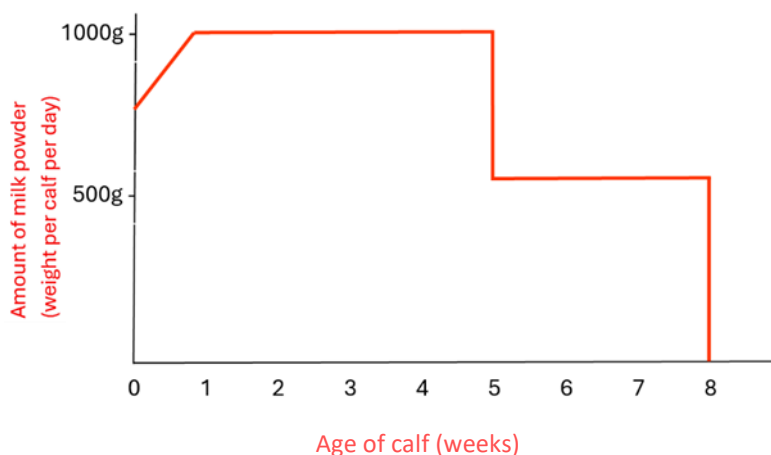


Image above demonstrates level of milk feeding against age of calf when using step feeding



So, even after a rather long article – there’s still plenty left to say! If you’re interested in working on your youngstock health, from nutrition to housing and everything in between, do give the office a ring and we can do a review for you. Sarah’s off shortly on her travels for the summer, from July through to end of September, but will be back out on farm before long (October onwards). She’ll send you a postcard!

Meeting suggestions

As the summer months are often a little quieter for us at the practice, we thought it would be a good time to hold some meetings. We would love to hear your suggestions for topics you would be interested to learn more about.

Let us know your suggestions at the office, on our Facebook page or if you bump into us out and about.

