



# SCOURING CALVES

## INTRODUCTION

Scour is the biggest cause of pre-weaning calf losses in the UK. Simple management changes can significantly reduce these losses.

## KEY CONTROL MEASURES

- Colostrum
- Hygiene at calving
- Hygiene in calf rearing pens
- Vaccination

Calves should be fed at least 3-4 litres (6-8 pints) of colostrum within the first 6 hours of life followed by a further 3 litres, 6 hours later. Calves should be fed clean colostrum for at least 3 days, but ideally for the entire risk period.

Hygiene at calving is very important to prevent the build up of infection. Calve cows on clean, dry bedding. Always cover calf's umbilical cord in iodine or Engemycin Spray.

Hygiene in calf rearing pens is also essential. Beds should be clean and dry, pens should be steam cleaned between batches of calves, and buckets/water troughs should be regularly cleaned with disinfectant.

Vaccinations are available for rotavirus, coronavirus, *E.coli* and salmonella. Cows can be vaccinated 3 to 12 weeks before calving with 'Rotavec Corona' vaccine. Via colostrum the vaccine protects calves in the first few weeks of life against rotavirus, coronavirus and *E.coli* K99. However the vaccine can only protect calves that have been fed adequate colostrum.



## COMMON CAUSES OF CALF SCOUR:

- *E.coli*
- Coronavirus
- Cryptosporidia
- Salmonella
- Rotavirus



## TREATMENT

The treatment depends on the cause of the scour. For viral diseases such as rota and coronavirus, fluid therapy and anti-inflammatories are most important. Antibiotics can be helpful when bacteria (*E.coli* and salmonella) are the cause of the scour. Cryptosporidium is a completely different type of disease and requires treatment with a specific prescription medicine (e.g. Halocur).

It is important to find out which of the many diseases is causing the calves to scour. Whenever you get an outbreak (>5% of calves) or a death caused by scour, then you should submit faecal samples to your vet for diagnosis. The sample should be taken from a calf before you have given it any treatment.

All calves that have watery scour are likely to become dehydrated. Fluid therapy with an electrolyte solution is essential to correct this dehydration. It is also important that the calves get energy in the form of milk, as they need this energy to fight off the disease. Feed electrolyte solution and then milk 2-4 hours later. Do not mix electrolyte salts with milk (Rehydion and other gels are an exception to this rule as they can be mixed with milk). **Calves should be getting a total daily feed of 6-8 litres.** Feeding less than this will result in stunted growth rates and calves that are unable to fight off infections such as pneumonia.

## KEY POINTS

Calf scour is caused by many different diseases, always get a diagnosis before treatment

Scour leads to dehydration

All scouring calves should receive fluid therapy - 7 litres of fluids per calf per day to prevent dehydration

Good hygiene minimises cases of scour, keep buckets clean

3 to 4 litres of quality colostrum should be fed in first 6 hours

Most scouring calves DO NOT need antibiotics



Rotavec Corona  Halocur

For further information,  
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