

SICK CALVES – WHAT TO LOOK FOR

EARLY IDENTIFICATION - one or more of the following symptoms may be present:

- Elevated early morning temperature
- Reduced consumption of milk or milk replacer
- Droopy ears, glassy eyes, dry coat
- Watery and/or bloody diarrhea
- Cough, runny nose, difficulty in breathing
- Weakness, swelling of joints or umbilical area
- Lameness, reluctance or refusal to get up.

GOOD PRACTICE – at the same time every morning for the first week of life or during any periods of risk due to change in environment, change in feed or exposure to any other stress factors, use a rectal thermometer to monitor the temperature of the calves. If the temperature exceeds 39.4 degrees Celsius for 2 successive mornings, this is a tell tale warning sign particularly if it is accompanied by slow or reduced milk intake at the next feeding and/or any of the above symptoms. Early detection is the key!!

WARNING – Our first reaction is often to blame the milk replacer or feed. When we do this, we are missing valuable time in reacting to the real cause of sickness which is rarely feed related.

THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT DISEASE PROBLEMS:

1. **SCOURS** – (neonatal calf diarrhea) can be due to viruses, bacteria or parasites; transmission is usually via fecal contamination
2. **SEPTICEMIA** - is caused by disease producing organisms or their toxins in the blood; transmission is usually a result of a bacterial infection transmitted from the mother in the uterus, or during or immediately after birth. Frequently the source is fecal contamination. It is the most severe disease and can cause permanent damage to the calf.
3. **PNEUMONIA** – is caused by airborne respiratory disease pathogens transmitted by other animals

Dr. Sheila M. McGuirk, DVM, PhD of the University of Wisconsin-Madison advises to use the 5 C's as an effective formula for managing the young dairy calf:

COLOSTRUM * CLEANLINESS * COMFORT * CALORIES * CONSISTENCY

Visit www.calfcare.ca to learn more about the 5 C's and to obtain other useful information on good calf management.