



Wensum Valley

Veterinary Surgeons

Newsletter

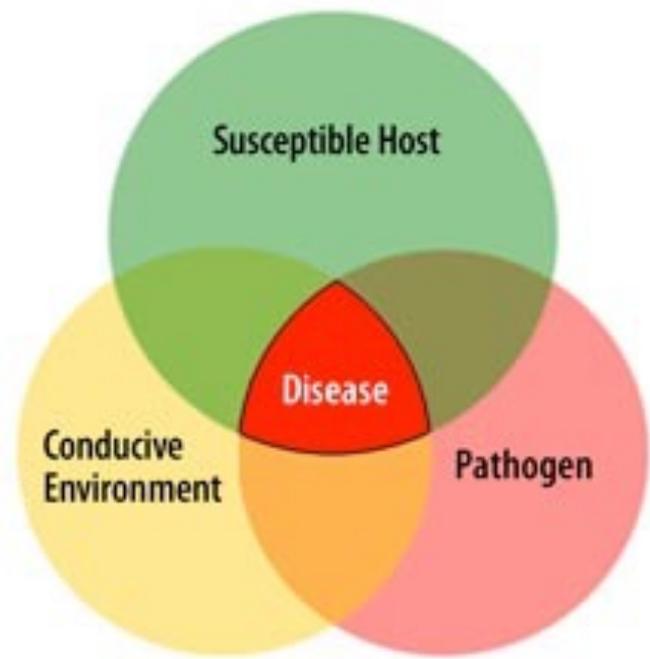
March 2016



Dave talking to a local riding club last month - if you would like one of us to give a farm veterinary talk to a club or farm walk then just give us a call

### Calf and Lamb Disease

Disease in young calves/lambs can be very costly with repercussions being seen through the entire life of the animal. Disease at this young age can have substantial costs through long term growth rate and productivity as well as in the short term, medicines usage and time. Disease occurrence and prevention is a balance between three things: the pathogen, the environment and the newborn.



Colostrum is the most crucial factor in getting a newborn off to a healthy start in life. A good rule of thumb is **10% of bodyweight within the first 6 hours of life.**

Many dairy calves will be routinely stomach tubed with colostrum but it is much harder to assess in beef animals and ewes. If you are not 100% confident that the calf/lamb has had a full belly of milk at least twice within this first 6 hours then the cow should be crushed so that the calf can either be put on or she can be milked out. We appreciate that this is much harder to assess and manage when calving or lambing at grass!

**Hygiene of the calving or lambing pen** is a large risk factor for conditions such as navel ill and joint ill. If the newborn lies in dirty bedding early in life it is at higher risk for picking up bacteria. 'Hot-bedding' cows and calves quickly into and out of calving pens can lead to a high level of disease build up. Mucking out and giving clean straw between occupants is essential. Ideally there will be sufficient space to **allow a pen to be rested for 3 days**, cleaned and disinfected between animals using it. Outdoor animals are inherently cleaner in this respect than indoor animals.

Management in the shed with the newborns in is the next risk point. Again clean bedding is essential but of more importance is preventing overcrowding and mixing of age groups. Insufficient space leads to an overall build-up of bacteria within the environment leading to a higher chance of infection. **Older calves that have developed immunity to some pathogens will still be shedding large amounts of infectious material** that can again cause a huge build-up of disease in the environment. The cumulative effect is that the younger calves within the shed are at a much higher risk of becoming infected.

**Buildings** have a key role to play in preventing disease. Ensuring good ventilation to remove any airborne pathogens whilst at the same time preventing a draft will see much improved calf health. A key concept is the Lower Critical Temperature (LCT) of a calf: The LCT is the temperature below which the calf must use up extra energy to maintain its own body temperature. Draft and damp can increase the LCT from 7°C to 17°C meaning the calf is putting more of its energy into keeping itself warm and less into growth and fighting disease. If changes to the buildings aren't appropriate or feasible then **calf jackets** are re-useable, relatively inexpensive and can make a big difference.



**FEVER TAGS** — more on these next month. An exciting development in calf health monitoring. A temperature sensor sits in the ear connected to a tag. If a calf has a raised temperature (not just a brief spike) then the tag flashes red to alert the stockman

For further advice contact the practice on: 01328 864444  
check out our website : [wensumvalleyvets.co.uk](http://wensumvalleyvets.co.uk)  
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