

## Greymouth Gossip



Calving is upon us! Hopefully you've had a good winter and perhaps even managed to get a break away from farm work.

Laurence has arrived back from his UK trip. His first day back on board was filled with the joys of answering hundreds of emails and the challenges of our annual stocktake. Many thanks for your patience if you were trying to contact us that day.

Speaking of holidays, Molly has been away enjoying summer in Italy. She has been indulging in art, scenery, and pizzas in very hot weather.

Nadine brought her bouncing baby, Taylor, into the clinic to introduce her to her future. It was good to see them both doing well.

The team has been the recipient of plenty of Maria's baking recently, for Matariki and her birthday. We are a very spoilt bunch.



Our winter quiz night was held late last month – and we had some competitive attendees! The range of curly questions covered dairy knowledge as well as general world trivia. For example, did you know that India grows more than 30 million tonnes of bananas a year?!

## Checklist



### COWS

- Book in your RVMs.
- Complete scours vaccinations.
- Check body condition scores.
- Pre-calving trace element testing and/or supplementation for selenium, copper and magnesium.
- Good transition diet.
- Record all 'At Risk' cows over calving (down cows, assisted calvings, retained membranes, dead calf, twin calves etc).

### CALVES

- Complete calf shed prep.
- Is your calving kit organised?
- Ensure replacement calves get enough high-quality colostrum (4L in first 12 hours of life).
- Spray navels with iodine.
- Maintain high hygiene standards when dealing with calves, including regularly cleaning the calf shed and trailer.
- Book in disbudding.

### YEARLINGS

- Is their copper and selenium supplementation up-to-date?
- Drench for internal and external parasites (worms and lice).
- Check weight gain – target weight 50% of mature weight.

### BULLS

- Start thinking about buying in new bulls.
- Blood test any bulls for BVD.

## SPRING ORDER DEALS 2025

**1 July - 10 August**

Stock up for spring and **SAVE**, with our limited time deals on quality calving supplies.

Includes: metabolics, energy and fluid therapies, drenches, minerals, hoof care products, disinfectants, animal markers, gloves and more.

*Terms and conditions apply.*

**DON'T  
MISS  
OUT!**



## When s\*\*t hits the fan: Calves with scours

By Marjan Sprock

**Calving time is here, and the calf shed will be beginning to fill up.**

As a great farmer – and we know you are – your colostrum management is ideal, with quality (>22 measured on a Brix refractometer), quantity (4-6 litres), quickly (fed within 12 hours of birth), quantified (regular assessment of IgG levels), and squeaky clean!

But out of the blue, you find you have calves with diarrhoea. The cause may be nutritional or infectious. Discovering what type you are dealing with can reduce cost, time, illness and potential deaths.

**Nutritional diarrhoea** is commonly caused by dietary and/or management factors, rather than infectious agents.

This could be because of:

- Feeding methods
- Overfeeding
- Poor milk quality
- Environmental stress

While often resolving on its own, providing electrolytes can help prevent dehydration. Calves with nutritional scours often look well in themselves, and their faeces are not overly smelly or bloody.

**Infectious scours** can present as watery or loose stools, which may be brown, grey, or yellow, and may contain blood and mucus. These calves often have a reduced appetite and appear more tired and weak compared to other calves.

Additional signs can include:

- Reluctant to drink
- Has a dirty backside
- Looks depressed
- Drooping ears
- Sunken eyes

In severe cases of scours, the dehydration and electrolyte imbalances can cause death.

Giving electrolytes alongside milk as soon as scours are seen can assist regardless of infection type. However, best treatment can only be given when you know what is causing the issue.

**We have an on-farm scours test available, called the WITNESS test.** This can identify the five most common causes of infectious diarrhoea in calves: Cryptosporidium, Rotavirus, Coronavirus, E. Coli and Giardia.

We simply take a faecal sample and the WITNESS test can confirm what's affecting that calf in just ten minutes. It's easy and gives you results right then and there.

Get in touch if you need a scours test this spring or if you'd like us to visit your calf shed for a health check. Whether you're concerned about an individual or an entire mob, we're here to help you keep your calves happy and healthy.

We can also assess the IgG levels of your calves to confirm how your colostrum management is going.

Call us if you have any questions.

## Mastitis in dry cows

By Molly Kells

Did you struggle with mastitis cases amongst your non-lactating cows this winter?

Here are a few tips to help keep your herd healthy during the dry period:

- ✓ Keep cows that have been dried off away from the milking shed for 10-14 days. Movement near this area can cause them to let their milk down.
- ✓ Keep them off wet, muddy paddocks if possible, especially in those first few days post dry-off.
- ✓ Keep them calm, and move them slowly to new paddocks so they don't kick up muck.
- ✓ After two weeks, ideally bring the whole herd in and teat spray them.
- ✓ Observe your cows in the paddock in the weeks after drying them off. Any with red or swollen looking quarters of their udder should be brought in to be checked and treated.
- ✓ If treating with Dry Cow, treat only the infected quarter. The reduced blood flow in unaffected quarters can cause the inhibitory substances to remain in the udder into spring, when you'll want their milk to be going into the vat!

**Have a yarn with your vet about how wintertime went for your herd. If you saw a lot of mastitis, we can help you put together a plan for next year.**





# When should you step in and assist a calving?

By Marvin Wiens

## As a general rule of thumb:

Assist cows if there's no progress within 30 minutes of the waterbag showing.

Assist heifers if there's no progress within one hour of the waterbag showing.

OR assist if you see:

- Only one leg.
- Only the head.
- A back foot or the tail (indicating it's backwards).
- No feet after active straining.
- The cow appears tired or distressed.

If unsure, call your vet. The longer you wait, the more chance of a stillbirth or injury – and your vet is here for these exact situations.

## How to assist a calving safely:

### 1. Prepare yourself and the cow

- Bring your calving kit, including gloves, disinfectant, lube, ropes/chains and puller.
- Restrain the cow in a race, head bail or pen for safety.
- Wash the cow's vulva with clean water.

### 2. Check the calf's position

- Gently insert your gloved, disinfected and lubricated hand into the birth canal to feel what's happening with the calf.
- If the calf is presenting normally, you should feel two front feet and a nose coming together, with the hoof soles facing down.
- If the calf is mispresented, you'll likely need to reposition it, which can be difficult. Call your vet if you're not sure how to achieve this yourself.
- Use lots of lube!

### 3. Attach calving ropes or chains

- Loop ropes/chains securely above the fetlocks on both front legs.
- Use a double half-hitch to spread pressure evenly and ensure the legs will not be injured.
- Pull gently backwards in time with contractions. It may help to alternate pulling the left and right leg to 'walk' the calf out.

### 4. Use a calf puller (if needed)

- Only use a puller if both front legs and the head are in the right position – and even then use it carefully!
- Gently pull downward and outward in a smooth rhythm in time with contractions.
- Stop if you're using a lot of force. If it's not coming easily, get help from your vet. Sometimes the calf's shoulders can be stuck or there might be another problem.

### 5. Care for the calf after it's born

- Clear mucus from the calf's nose and mouth.
- Rub it briskly with a clean towel to stimulate breathing.
- Spray or dip the navel in iodine.
- Make sure the calf is fed colostrum within two hours to give it energy (tube feed it if necessary).

### 6. Monitor the cow

- She may need treatment for energy loss, pain, or injury.
- Look out for signs of distress, internal tearing, retained placenta, or twins.

## Final tip – know your limits:

If the cow is straining hard but not progressing, or if the calf feels too big or wrongly positioned, don't wait too long to call your vet. A delay can cost both the calf and the cow.

Being calm, clean and prepared makes all the difference, but assisting calvings safely is a skill that improves with practice – and knowing when to ask for help is part of doing it right!



Photo credit: Andrew Kingsbury, Iowa Beef Center, Iowa State University

## Our clinic

