

NAVAN VETERINARY SERVICES – NOVEMBER 2016 NEWSLETTER

The colder, wet days of November often bring about stress to the youngest animals in your herd leading to higher risk of diseases such as pneumonia. Calves that did well in the warmer months bedded with sawdust or shavings now need something with more insulation properties, like straw. Whether in a hutch, single pen or group pens, calves need enough straw bedding that they can nestle down into and keep warm. The proper depth of straw is such that you can't see the calf's legs when they are lying down. Calf behavior is such that they will often want to lie against a wall or structure, likely satisfying basic instincts for safety. Calf pens that incorporate the outside wall as part of the pen are not ideal as those walls are typically quite cold in winter. Calf pens should have walls that are not part of the exterior structure. If unavoidable, you can line the interior portion of those walls with bales of straw, so there is a warm, dry area for the calves to lie up against.

Other newsletters have detailed the extra energy a calf requires from milk as outside temperatures drop. (You can access all of the newsletters on our website).

Another way to give calves a little more protection from pneumonia in the colder months is to use your vaccines strategically. The intranasal vaccine (Inforce 3) is one we often use on very young calves will give protection for approximately one month. Many herds that use this vaccine will follow-up with a modified live vaccine some time later, perhaps at 3 months of age and this may work quite well in the warm months of the year.

During the colder months we can modify our vaccination program to give the 1st MLV shot at a younger age, close to 1 – 1 ½ months old. This way as the Inforce is beginning to lose its effectiveness the calf will be provided with additional coverage and protection. Even if you are not using the intranasal vaccine, you can still give the 1st MLV earlier in the calf's life. This will be beneficial so that the calf will be capable of mounting an immune response during stressful times in their life such as weaning, when we often see more pneumonia and diarrhea as it is.

Giving some vaccine protection to calves prior to weaning may help to avoid some respiratory infections at this time.

If your goal is to wean calves at 8 weeks of age, for example, you can give your first respiratory vaccine at 4 weeks of age.

The point being is that we can use our vaccines differently as the weather changes to best make use of them. If you have questions please ask any of us!!