

## Hygiene of Calf Feeding Equipment

By Lucy Hepworth



Our dairy youngstock group have been comparing notes on the hygiene of feeding equipment. Our vet techs James and Steve have been swabbing equipment – feeders of all sizes, teats, milk taxis, whisks, colostrum feeders, dump buckets; the swabs have been sent for a TBC (total bacterial count) at an external lab.

The group met up for the first quarterly meeting since Covid in August, and we chatted about the results and the different cleaning protocols farms use. We had input from Pearce Seeds and Wynnstay on the products available.

- 13 farms sampled
- Target TBC < 100'000 cfu (colony forming units)
- Range of results 160'000'000 cfu to 5'000 cfu
- Huge variety in cleaning practices

This is the recommended AHDB protocol:

**RINSE** 32–38°C. Too cold and it won't shift milk residue. Too hot and it will cook on milk proteins.

**CLEAN** Fairy liquid or alkaline detergent in hot water 54–57°C (hot enough to need gloves). **SOAKING** preferable and **SCRUB**.

**WASH OFF** with hot water.

**DISINFECT** with crypto disinfectant or acid sanitiser (peracetic acid 1%) to avoid spreading crypto/avoid reinfection. Can use hand sprayer for ease.

**DRYING** Upside down – think about having drying racks and rails. Don't store dump buckets with lid on.

Farms using fairy liquid for detergent had good swabbing results. Other options are alkaline detergents such as Autosan Blue (Wynstay) or Kenosan (Pearce Seeds). Kenosan needs applying with a foaming lance on a pressure washer and is excellent at getting into nooks and crannies, an easy alternative to soaking.

To disinfect the equipment against cryptosporidia (very resistant to most of the cleaning process), spray on Kenocox (2%), Coxicur or Cyclex (3%) and leave to dry for 4 hours. After drying, equipment disinfected with Kenocox can be used straight away, the other two disinfectants need to be rinsed off. Farms doing this stage are using hand sprayers.

If a crypto disinfectant is not required, then all feeding equipment can be sprayed with an acid sanitiser before drying. This 'protects' equipment from getting reinfected with bacteria. Peracetic acid at 1% in a hand sprayer would suffice.

Drying is key so that residual moisture doesn't allow bacterial growth.



Most farms are time short and we are aware that this requires time investment to be done well. However, healthier calves with fewer scours are easier to manage and cheaper to rear, as well as going on to perform well as adult milking cows.

“ We had already had a bit of a think about our cleaning protocol for calf feeding equipment including reading ahdb's recommendations, but like a lot of people I suspect, had dismissed most of it as in the “too hard box”. After discussions at the young stock group; including explaining the reasons behind some of the key recommendations, we looked at it all again and adapted our protocol and built a new drying rack to keep the equipment off the floor. We now do a warm rinse, either soak with dairy chemical for 20mins or scrub with warm detergent, warm rinse and finally spray with disinfectant. This has only increased our wash time mildly as we were already focusing on it as an area that needed time due to our batch system and shared feeders. We've all noticed the feeders look cleaner (less greasy) and our swab results had a very low TBC, so we're really pleased with the changes we've made which have also been reflected in a very low incidence of scour and therefore saved time in rehydrating calves and of course improved weight gains. We also enjoyed hearing other farmers' share their protocols and ideas which was really useful. ”

Holly Gammon, Okevale Farm. Youngstock Group Member

**If you would like more information on the young stock group, please contact Lucy at the clinic.**

# Don't talk about the health plan - By Josephine Child

Just over two years ago, we decided to start carrying out annual performance reviews with every herd and flock we look after, a move that you probably barely even registered since most milk buyers require Health plan updates annually. Red tractor requires health plan updates every 18 months and the RCVS requires that we have 'adequate' knowledge of animals in our care, which means frequent visits to stock! As of 1st November this has now changed to every 12 months. There were several reasons for this, firstly, you can not improve something if you can't measure it so number one; data collection. Secondly to improve our grasp on antibiotic usage in beef herds and sheep flocks. In the UK the framework for measuring beef and sheep antibiotic usage acknowledges that we still only have data from around 40% of farms in these categories, so number two; data collection. Thirdly, if we have some measurements then we can start to make comparisons between similar enterprises and understand better the most important Key Performance Indicators to help your business grow. So, number three; data collection..... Can you see where I'm going here?

With the 'Agricultural transition plan' on the horizon and clues about DEFRA's health and welfare pathway beginning to emerge, it can be seen that there are even more benefits of regular recording of KPI's and performance reviews.

ALL herds and flocks regardless of size should have an annual performance review.

The intention of these reviews is to discuss what has gone well in the previous 12 months and to plan for the coming 12 months. It is becoming increasingly important that we consider sustainability measures such as carbon footprinting, which is essentially reduced wherever efficiency is improved. In the dairy herd this may be ensuring that heifers are calving at 2 years of age. In the Beef herd it might be looking at calf weaning weights and growth rates compared to dam size. Calf rearing and finishing units want to be growing their animals quicker, on less feed, with less incidence of calf diseases. In sheep flocks we look at twinning rates and the ability of different types of ewes to rear their body weight worth of lambs, as well as performance of ewe lambs.

In short, we want to help you improve the efficiency of your business. Now that all sounds very simple but part of these reviews is about teasing out where inefficiencies stem from. We will ask about production figures, but what we are really looking for is underlying evidence of disease that may be causing reduction in productivity.

**BVD for example, increases carbon footprint in the region of 130% due to increased ill health in the beef herd causing reduced growth and production.**

**A cow with a single case of clinical mastitis is responsible for 48 kg CO<sub>2</sub>/t more GHG emissions than a cow without a case of CM. This rises to 92 kg CO<sub>2</sub>/t more for cows with three cases of CM in a lactation compared with cows without CM.**

**Methane output in sheep is increased by 33% in sheep with a gastrointestinal worm burden due to reduced milk production, poorer fertility, increased treatments, and poor growth rates.**

Things that will help with assessing these parameters are:

- Good record keeping: don't just make figures up the day before our visit!
- Milk recording: understanding milk quality and subclinical mastitis impacts
- Understanding your cost of production: what makes up your inputs and outputs
- Having the ability to weigh animals: detecting reduction in growth rates and knowing targets may be the first indication of disease
- Set aims and objectives: these will form the basis of the next review in 12 months' time to measure improvements.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

### Beef Discussion Meeting

Wednesday 24th November @ 6pm

### Mastering Medicines

Wednesday 8th December @ 11am-2pm

Please contact the farm office on 01258 472314 for any enquiries.

## DRUG UPDATES:

### BULK TANK TESTING FOR OSTERTAGIA

We have received some funding from Norbrook that allows us to test your bulk tank for ostertagia (gut worms). Please get in touch with either your regular vet or Izzie in the farm office to arrange for a sample collections.