MANAGING A **SCOUR OUTBREAK**

Scour is a multi-factorial disease which can strike for many reasons, even on farms with good biosecurity, nutrition and vaccination protocols. If you have a scour outbreak, adopt the following process to tackle it as quickly and efficiently as possible:

1. Separate

Scour is most often caused by viruses, bacteria or parasites which transfer easily between calves. Remove scouring calves from the group to help prevent the spread of infection. Quarantining scouring calves will also make it easier to treat them. Scouring suckler calves and their dams should be separated from other calves and their mothers.

2. Rehydrate

Diarrhoea causes losses of body fluids and minerals. Give at least two extra feeds of a good quality oral rehydration solution as soon as diarrhoea is detected and daily during the recovery period. Make sure the rehydration feeds are given in addition to regular milk feeds.

3. Feed milk

Continue to provide scouring calves with normal amounts of milk or milk replacer as the source of nutrition and energy for the calf. Do not force the calf to drink milk if it is depressed or refuses to suckle. Leave suckler calves with their dams.

4. Warmth and comfort

If scouring calves are cold, their energy reserves will be used up keeping warm rather than fighting the infection. Keep them warm and comfortable to give them the best chance.

5. Call the vet

Your veterinarian will be able to investigate what infectious agents are contributing to the calf's scour and will give you the best advice on the available measures of prevention and treatment.

A calf with scour is a serious problem and you should always call your vet if you are encountering any of these problems on your farm:

- You have an increased number of scouring calves.
- The scouring calf refuses to drink several feeds in one day.
- The scouring calf is down or very weak and does not improve in 6-12 hours after oral rehydration.
- The scouring calf is visibly dehydrated (as intravenous rehydration will be needed).
- The calf's temperature is above or below the normal range (38.5°C - 39.5°C).
- Calves have blood in their faeces.
- Calves are dying.

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REHYDRATION MANAGEMENT OF **SCOURING CALVES**

Dehydration is the primary cause of death when a calf has diarrhoea. It is vital that the calves with scour are detected promptly and carefully observed for signs of dehydration. Oral rehydration therapy should be started as soon as diarrhoea is detected.

Rehydration of calves with diarrhoea

1. Estimate the degree of dehydration and calculate the additional amounts of fluids needed using the formula and scoring table below: Calf's body weight x (estimated dehydration %) ÷ 100 = quantities that need to be fed in addition to milk/day (litres)
2. Feed the calf's milk or milk replacer ration first.
3. 15-20 minutes after the calf's feed, give the amount of oral rehydration solution needed to restore the fluid balance. If the calf is unwilling to drink from a bottle, use a stomach tube or split the daily amount into three or four smaller feedings throughout the day. This encourages the calf to drink more liquids on its own.

Signs of dehydration	Loss of bodily fluids	Behaviour	
• Scouring but no other visible signs of dehydration	• 0 - 3% • Oral rehydration	• Standing • Alert • Strong suckle	
• Slight dehydration • Slightly sunken eyes • Pinched skinfold takes 4 - 5s to flatten	• 4 - 7% • Oral rehydration • Consider intravenous rehydration	• Standing • Depressed • Weak suckle • Head down • Less reactive	
• Moderate dehydration • Sunken eyes • Pinched skinfold takes +5s to flatten • Cold ears and legs	• 8 - 12% • Oral and intravenous rehydration	• Unable to stand • Sternal position • No suckling • Depressed • Very low responsiveness	
• Severe dehydration • Deeply sunken eyes • Dry and tight skin • Cold ears and legs	• > 12% • Intravenous rehydration	• Unable to stand • Lateral position • Severe depression • No suckling • Non responsive	

Please speak to your vet if you would like any help in spotting the signs of dehydration or training on how to treat it.

DISEASE? NOT ON MY FARM!

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