

CALVING EASE

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Stress and Coccidiosis

We have all heard the same story. These heifers (one to six months old) have coccidiosis. How can this be? I am feeding a coccidiostat. Look, right here (milk replacer tag, calf starter grain bag, TMR ration mixing sheet). See. I am doing things right. They can't have coccidiosis.

The Impossible Can Happen

It's always a good thing to just check on coccidiostat feeding rates before deciding that the impossible has happened. These are weight:dose additives. Bigger heifers need more coccidiostat. Often the "impossible" is traced back to underfeeding the control drug.

It's always a good thing to just check that all the heifers are consuming the coccidiostat. If it's in milk replacer a calf that has not been drinking may be at risk because of this. If it's in the calf starter a calf that's off feed may be consuming too little drug to do the job. If it's in a TMR fed at a bunk some heifers may not be eating enough TMR. This is especially common when pens are overstocked even if the pen is never out of feed.

Well, I checked all of that stuff and they still have coccidiosis. And, it's bad. Look at all that loose manure. Look at them, they have rough hair coats. Look at those dirty smelly rear ends. The impossible has happened.

The Impossible Has Happened

The impossible did happen because we overstressed these calves or heifers. Preweaned calves may have been overstressed because we failed to feed enough to meet their needs for maintenance and growth. Or, we fed a poor quality milk

replacer. Or, we tried to wean them without be sure they were rumen competent. Or, (fill in the blank).

Transition heifers may have been over stressed because we changed too many things at once. Stacking stresses is a common cause of coccidiosis outbreaks in heifers being fed normally adequate amounts of coccidiostat. Changes in feed and housing too often are piled on top of vaccinations and/or overly rough handling.

Overstocking of transition pens may result in uneven consumption of both the TMR and the control drug. When there is too little space for all the animals to eat at one time uneven consumption among transition age heifers is almost certain. This is especially common where calves are weaned in a lock-step manner by age. Often there is a big size difference among calves in a single pen. The bigger pushy ones bully weaker, shy heifers. Even when there is adequate feed available in at a too-small feed bunk these shy heifers have been dominated so much they hesitate to spend an adequate amount of time eating. These smaller heifers get stressed because they are barely meeting their maintenance needs. They often have subclinical pneumonia as well leading to even more stress.

Prevent the Impossible

Check out the sources of stress for your heifers. A stressed out heifer is a prime candidate for coccidiosis regardless of your coccidia control program.

Calf Feeder's Tip

Not all of us are inside during windy winter storms. Many of us have outdoor hutch housing. Most of us experience strong winter winds. And, it's not nice to discover hutches in the neighbor's hedgerow or dooryard when we arrive in the morning. At least two nearby farms have taken to parking large equipment on the windward side of their hutches in the winter. Big ten-wheeler trucks are a great windbreak. Other pieces of infrequently used large equipment that can stand exposure to the weather work well also. One heifer grower stores the winter supply of wrapped bales of straw on the windward side. Windbreaks don't have to be trees.

If you know of someone that doesn't currently receive **Calving Ease** but would like to, tell them to **WRITE** to **Calving Ease**, 11047 River Road, Pavilion, NY 14525 or to **CALL** either 585-591-2660 (Attica Vet Assoc. office) or 585-343-8128 (Offhaus Farms Office) or **FAX** (585-591-2898) or **e-mail** sleadley@frontiernet.net or pams91@2ki.net . A limited number of back issues may be accessed on the Internet at www.calfnotes.com and clicking on the link, Calving Ease.