

Calf Pneumonia

Background:

Lung inflammation e.g. caused by bacterial or viral infection. Commonly viruses are the causative agent which then allows a secondary bacterial infection to take hold. The disease process is often complex and multifactorial, meaning that more than one pathogen/bug is involved.

Common causative agents: Parainfluenza (PI3), Bovine Respiratory Syncytial Virus (BRSV), Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis (IBR), Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD), Mycoplasma, Mannheimia haemolytica, Pasteurella multocida, Haemophilus somni.

Clinical Signs:

- Nasal/Eye Discharge
- Coughing
- Laboured breathing
- Off-feed/milk
- Weight loss/ Reduced gain
- Increased temperature (>39.5°C/103°F)
- Head tilt
- Depressed/lethargic

Diagnosis:

Clinical signs are often enough to diagnose a case of pneumonia. Veterinary advice should be sought and the lungs can be checked for signs of damage. Especially in cases of recurrent infection or where increasing numbers of animals are affected or deaths have occurred.

Nasal swabs, airway washes and blood samples can all be taken to decipher the cause of the problem and aid with treatment choice. If necessary, your vet may advise a post-mortem for a more detailed analysis of the disease processes on the holding.

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Treatment/Prevention:

- Prompt treatment is essential in gaining a good outcome.
- Ensure adequate colostrum management soon after birth, 3-4 litres given within 6 hours.
- Cleanliness/Hygiene is paramount with shed design and ventilation. Moisture should be kept to a minimum. Exclude draughts and ensure calves are well-bedded with clean, fresh straw.
- Disinfect pens between calves. Minimise mixing of stock where possible, especially different age groups and from varying sources.
- Maintain good nutrition and administer fluids/rehydration therapy if off-feed.
- Anti-inflammatories can be useful to reduce fever and aid a speedy recovery.
- Choice of Antibiotic is important so please discuss with your vet.
- Vaccination is valuable in controlling pneumonia but is not a substitute for good management.
- Beware of underlying diseases reducing immune responses e.g. BVD, lice, ringworm.

Please contact the practice for advice or if you have any concerns on 01373 451115.