

PORT PERRY VETERINARY SERVICES

-QUARTERLY-

CALF SCOURS

Preventing and treating common causes of calf scours



Believe it or not, spring is fast approaching, and with it comes calving season. One of the most common calf problems we encounter is diarrhea. This can be a serious problem and can cause the death of the calf if not treated properly.

Common causes of calf diarrhea are: *E. coli*, *Salmonella*, *Clostridium*, *Coccidia*, *Cryptosporidia*, *Rotavirus* and *Coronavirus*. *E. coli*, *Salmonella*, and *Clostridium* are bacterial diseases, *Coccidia* and *Cryptosporidia* are parasitic diseases while *rotavirus* and *coronavirus* are viral diseases. *E. coli* usually occurs in the first 5 days of life, *rotavirus* and *coronavirus* within the first few weeks, *Clostridium* from 5-10 days of age, *Cryptosporidia* from 5 days to about one month old, *Salmonella* from 2-6 weeks and *Coccidia* from 3

weeks to any age.

Ensuring all calves get 3-4 liters of colostrum within the first 6 hours of life is an important way to help prevent calf illness. If the calf doesn't nurse on its own, assisting it to nurse or using a bottle or esophageal feeder will be necessary.

It is also important to clean the calving area between cows to decrease the amount of contamination the calves are exposed to at birth. It also helps to keep any pens the calves are in as clean as possible.

Depending on the cause of the diarrhea on your farm, scours vaccines are very helpful to decrease the incidence and severity disease in calves. These vaccines are usually given 2 months prior to calving and then again at 1 month prior to calving.

What's New at the Clinic?

New this month, we now have a digital x-ray unit and a new ultrasound machine with the capabilities of examining tendons, joints, lungs and abdomens of all species of animals. We will now be able to offer full lameness work-ups, pregnancy diagnosis in small ruminants, lung ultrasounds for pneumonia cases and abdominal ultrasounds for colics in addition to all the other services we provide for you and your animals.

In April, Dr. Rachel Busato will return from maternity leave. She is looking forward to seeing everyone and caring for your animals again.

**Call the clinic if you have any questions about any of the above material.
905-982-1243**

POTOMAC HORSE FEVER: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Port Perry Veterinary Services had six confirmed cases of Potomac Horse Fever last summer. This was a significant increase in the number of cases seen in this area and it is important to recognize the symptoms to ensure your horse receives appropriate care as soon as possible.

Definition: A potentially fatal illness caused by the bacteria *Neorickettsia risticii*. The course of the disease is not completely understood, but Potomac Horse Fever (PHF) is characterized by severe diarrhea, fever and subsequent laminitis.

Causes: PHF was originally described in horses living along the Potomac River in Maryland and Virginia. It is believed the disease is transmitted by mayflies and other insects, but freshwater snails are also believed to be involved in the life cycle. Routes of infection include bites from insects harboring the bacteria

and ingestion of infected snails or water contaminated by the infected snails.

Signs: Initial symptoms are vague and may go unnoticed. Horses go off feed as they spike a fever, often as high as 104°F or 40°C. The affected horse becomes colicky due to a brewing colitis and may have red mucus membranes. Within 24-48 hours, severe diarrhea develops and secondary dehydration and electrolyte changes occur. Toxins are released into the bloodstream (septicemia), raising the heart rate and beginning a cascade of reactions in the body. Bounding digital pulses can then be detected, the first sign of impending laminitis. Loss of protein from the diarrhea is often severe and causes swelling in the limbs and under the belly, which may take weeks to disappear.

Treatment: Your veterinarian should be called immediately should you suspect your horse

is showing signs of PHF. Treatment with oxytetracycline is effective when administered very shortly after the onset of clinical signs. If diarrhea is severe large volumes of IV fluids are required. Banamine is often administered to protect against septicemia. Septicemia is a severe consequence of infection with PHF and diarrhea/colitis, and may require referral to a clinic that can provide intensive care and plasma transfusions.

Prevention: Vaccination decreases the incidence and severity of the disease, but as with all vaccines, it is not entirely preventative. Mortality rates are significantly lower in vaccinated horses. Vaccination is recommended in spring, like vaccines for other insect-borne diseases. It is recommended that barn lights be turned off at night so as not to attract insects. Standing water should be eliminated or changed regularly as well.



SMALL RUMINANT ULTRASOUND

It can be useful to ultrasound your sheep or goats to determine if they are pregnant and how many fetuses they are carrying. This will allow you to better manage the dietary needs of the pregnant animals to avoid complications such as pregnancy toxemia. The best time to do the ultrasounds is when they are between 40 and 90 days gestation. Call now to book an appointment for an ultrasound.