

Managing suckler herds at calving

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Well-grown
first calvers
are essential

Plan your
calvings to
minimise
problems

Clean pens
and housing
to minimise
disease

Observe all
calvings if
possible

Intervene
only when
necessary

Use correct
navel care
routine

With the main calving season for suckler herds just around the corner, now is the time for farmers to prepare their sheds and equipment for the busy time ahead. There are a number of areas farmers need to focus their attention on around this time of year in advance of calving season.

Dry cow minerals

Spring-calving suckler cows need to receive dry cow minerals for four to six weeks prior to calving. Trace element deficiencies, especially copper, iodine and selenium have been variously associated with stillbirths, peri-natal mortality, retained placentas and a reduced resistance to scours, pneumonia, and navel and joint problems. Cows that are not getting concentrates can get 100g per day of loose pre-calver minerals, sprinkled onto silage. Vaccinate pregnant cows against rotavirus and

coronavirus, which are the most common organisms associated with calf scour. Ensure cows are vaccinated between three and 12 weeks pre calving. If cows slip outside this 12-week window, a booster vaccine will be required.

There is no vaccine available against cryptosporidium, which ranks with rotavirus as one of the most common infective organisms associated with calf scours. Note that vaccines do not immunise the unborn calf. Protection can only be obtained through early and adequate colostrum feeding.

Adequate colostrum

Ensure cows have adequate protein in their winter diet pre calving. Supplementation with a high-protein feed such as soya bean meal may be required, if silage protein is very low.

Calving facilities

It is recommended that there be one calving box per 10 cows. This is where cow and calf only remain in the box for one to two days. If there is a tight calving spread you will need more boxes. The boxes should be at least 3.6m x 4.0m in area. However, temporary pens can be erected at 3.6m x 3.6m where a cow and calf have to be kept on their own for a few days. Make sure that separating bars and gates of pens are safely secured and of adequate strength to hold heavy suckler cows. Boxes should be thoroughly cleaned, power washed and disinfected with a strong disinfectant

before use. Have plenty of straw in store before calving starts.

Check the availability of basic calving equipment such as disposable gloves for handling cows, clean soft calving ropes, iodine or chlorohexidine solution to treat navels, a functioning calving jack that is not worn or liable to slip, lubricant, electrolyte powders for scour treatment and a clean stomach tube. Having a few litres of frozen colostrum in the freezer is a good insurance policy for that weak calf or one that is slow to get to its feet. Three to four litres of colostrum in the first hour of life is crucial for any calf.

BETTER FARM UPDATE

Progress being made in Cavan

GARRETH McCORMACK is aiming to increase calf numbers and profits on his farm.

Farming 34 hectares of heavy clay type land on the outskirts of Bailieborough, Co. Cavan, Garreth McCormack has made steady progress over the duration of the BETTER Beef Farm Challenge. Cow numbers are to increase from 34 in 2017 to over 50 due to calving in spring 2020. Saler-type cows remain Garreth's breed of choice but since going 100% AI in spring 2018, a variety of other continental genetics are being used. The transition from a weanling production system to a predominately U-16 month bull system is working well. Last year bulls averaged 430kg carcasses, with an average carcass grade of U+3= at just over 15 months. Moving forward the plan is to

continue with U-16 month bulls as long as no factory specifications restrict the system and to continue to sell heifers as stores for breeding. Grassland management has also advanced on the farm. Growing extra grass has allowed an increase in stocking rate. Good grassland management, along with breeding, has been the foundation for the impressive animal performance. High-quality silage is consistently being made on the farm, with last year being no different. Recent sample results came back with a DMD of 72% and a crude protein of 14.3%. Soil fertility is continuously improving and recently the entire farm was sampled to give an indication of its levels.



The Beef Edge

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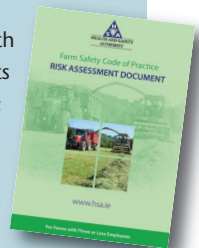
HEALTH & SAFETY

Older farmers more at risk



Update your Risk Assessment Document (RAD) in January. It's a legal requirement. Its role is to assist you to identify farm hazards. It gives guidance on managing all aspects of farm safety and health. Complete the RAD fully, then list health and safety actions needed. Farmers who implement their actions have safer farms. In 2019, 16 farm deaths occurred (provisional

HSA data from December 9). Ten victims were over 60 years old, with seven over 70 years. Fatal accidents were associated with: livestock (6); vehicles/machinery (5); crush/collapse (3); and, drowning (2). Give safety of older farmers special attention in 2020.



RESEARCH UPDATE

Anthelmintic resistance in cattle



ORLA M. KEANE, Animal and Bioscience Department, Teagasc, Grange, Dunsany, Co. Meath reports on anthelmintic resistance and how to tackle it.

The development and spread of antimicrobial resistance, which includes anthelmintic resistance, is a threat to animal health and welfare. Anthelmintic resistance is the ability of worms to survive treatment with anthelmintics at the recommended dose rate. A population of worms is designated as resistant if more than 5% survive exposure. It is a genetic trait of the worm, so resistant worms give rise to resistant offspring. Resistance to anthelmintics among gastrointestinal nematodes (gut or stomach worms) has now been identified on Irish cattle farms. Producers should therefore implement sustainable worm control strategies that delay the further development of anthelmintic resistance. This involves a combination of grazing management, stock management and the sustainable use of anthelmintics. Keep the cleanest grazing (such as forage crops) reseeded ground or hay/silage after grass, for the youngest, most naïve animals where possible. Graze calves ahead of older animals in a 'leader-follower' system. Mixed or sequential



Grazing cattle with sheep will reduce worm risk for both.

grazing of cattle with sheep will also reduce the worm challenge for each, as the majority of worms that infect cattle will not infect sheep and vice versa. Monitor performance and consider monitoring herd faecal egg count to time treatment so anthelmintics are only used when necessary. It is important that the correct dosing technique is used and that the animals are treated according to the manufacturer's instructions and dose rates. Check that the dosing equipment is delivering the correct amount before you treat. Ensure that anthelmintic treatments do not coincide with the movement of animals to lowly infected pastures, i.e., do not 'dose and move'. Older stock generally develop good immunity to gut worms. Only treat individual older animals with anthelmintics on the basis of demonstrated need. Biosecurity procedures should be in place to prevent bringing resistant worms onto the farm by maintaining a closed herd or treating incoming stock with at least two anthelmintics from different classes.