

# FARMGATE VETERINARY GROUP

Newsletter

March 2025

## Calving Cows

Calving takes place in 3 stages

- Stage 1 : cows nest and become uncomfortable
- Stage 2 : cows pass the water bag and the calf
- Stage 3 : the afterbirths are passed



Cows should not be moved during stage 1 as it can delay calving significantly. If cows are in stage 2 (waterbag passed) and making progress they should be given time. If the cow is not making progress or chewing her cud then additional time is of no benefit. If you are in doubt whether you can deliver the calf then look for assistance. The goal must be to have a live calf and cow, both uninjured, at the end of the process.

Health and safety at calving is very important. Even quiet cows can be dangerous at calving especially if a stranger appears! Realistically calving gates are essential kit on suckler farms, not only for calving but for putting calves sucking etc. Calving cows in cattle crushes is dangerous as cows may go down during the process which usually results in loss of the calf.

Calves should be placed sitting upright after calving and revived using cold water in the ears or by massaging the ribcage. Hanging calves for more than 30seconds or leaving them flat out on one side compromises lung function.

The most important job after calving the cow is to ensure the calf gets adequate colostrum. Over half all calves that are sent to the lab for post mortem did not get adequate colostrum.

- *Don't move cows during stage 1*
- *If cow is making progress give her time*
- *Be careful of cows at calving time—use a calving gate*
- *Colostrum intake is key*

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Lambing is in full swing

## Prolapse in Ewes

As ewes approach lambing there is increasing abdominal pressure which can cause prolapse. The incidence can be reduced by

- Marking and culling affected sheep and their offspring as there is a strong genetic predisposition.
- Avoid overcrowding and ensure adequate trough space.
- Feed meal twice daily rather than one large feed. Avoid letting ewes get overfat in mid pregnancy.
- Treat lame ewes including with painkillers as recumbency increases the risk.

### Treatment

- Prolapses must be treated—if they are left untreated the ewe will pass a waterbag prematurely and casualties are likely.
- Gently clean and replace the prolapse. If it is large and swollen an epidural and decompression of the bladder may be necessary.
- Retainers or harnesses are effective for mild cases. Buhner sutures are required for more severe cases. Sometimes long acting epidural anaesthesia, antibiotics and painkillers are required.



## Sheep Dosing

At lambing the immunity ewes have to stomach worms reduces and there is a marked increase in the eggs shed. This is called the peri-parturient rise and it results in contaminated pastures. Target dosing at-risk ewes (thin/carrying multiples) with a persistent product such as Cydectin drench will keep pastures clean for lambs and reduce the amount of dosing required during the summer.

Many sheep are showing up at the clinic gone down with fluke. Ewes need a fluke dose every two months during the winter months i.e. September to April. Use a product that kills both immature and mature fluke to prevent losses. Examples include *Flukiver*, *Fluconix* and *Ridafluke*. **Using products that only kill adult fluke or rumen fluke will result in deaths in fluke areas and is a waste of money**

## Lambs with Scour

There are many causes of scour in lambs. We can tentatively diagnose the cause of scour in lambs by the clinical signs and the age of lambs but sometimes lab tests are necessary to be sure what the cause is.

Ecoli/watery mouth affects lambs less than a week old. Cryptosporidium and viral scours will affect lambs between 1-3 weeks usually.

Recently we have diagnosed coccidiosis in lambs >3 weeks of age—likely due to wet mucky conditions given the weather. Some of these lambs had been drenched for worms! For accurate diagnosis and best advice contact us if you have an outbreak. It is better to have an accurate diagnosis than to guess the cause and as a result treat lambs with the wrong products.

## Calf Rearing

Rearing calves on milk replacer has become more popular. Getting a high level of thrive from calves is key to profitability.

- Calves should be fed 600g -800g high quality milk powder/day for the first month.
- Calves can be put on once a day feeding after a month.
- Calf creep and water must be available ad-lib.
- Vaccination against pneumonia is advisable.
- Calves should be treated for coccidiosis at 1 month.
- Milk replacer should be 20-24% protein, 18-20% fat and be made from milk product as opposed to vegetable product.
- Calves should not be offered hay/silage as it reduces the amounts of meal consumed. Roughage offered should be straw.
- Calves should double their weight in 56 days before weaning.
- If rearing calves contact us for a calf rearing plan.



**Check freshly calved cows for high SCC**

## Mastitis in Dairy Cows

Cows that were dried off with high SCC may or may not cure over the dry period. It is important to know as infected cows will spread mastitis through the machine during this lactation and result is higher SCC and more cows to cull. Cows that were high before drying off and still high need to have the offending quarter dried or rear calves. If you are recording don't wait too long for the first recording (a common mistake). If not recording the CMT paddle (above) can be used.

Environmental mastitis is picked up from the ground during the dry period and especially at calving. It can be very severe (ecoli mastitis or gangrenous mastitis) or contagious like that caused by *Strep uberis*. Hygiene in calving pens is very important. The use of teat sealers in cows is the best way of dealing with this problem. We prefer to recommend teat spraying/dipping heifers precalving rather than sealing as it is dangerous both from a mastitis and health & safety point of view.

### Transition Cows

The degree to which cows suffer negative energy balance in the first three weeks of lactation is the key to achieving good fertility that year. Tips include

- Keep feed intake up especially in calving pens
- Feed adequate Magnesium pre-calving
- Use a lower protein higher starch nut in early lactation
- Milk thin cows once a day

A transition cow blood package is available from the lab at very reasonable cost.

## FarmGate Vets Client Survey

We are planning to survey all our clients in the next couple of weeks by circulating a link by text to an online survey tool (surveymonkey).

We last surveyed clients in January 2020 which is 5 years ago now. At the time, we found the level of engagement with the survey fantastic and tried to use your responses to shape the services offered to you the client.

I felt it was a very useful exercise and a helpful reminder that clients wishes are a very important factor in how we go about our business at FarmGate Vets.

The survey is easy to complete at only 14 multiple choice questions and should only take 5-8 minutes.

The survey is completely anonymous and unless you write your name in the comments I will never know who responded to it—so we want you to be as honest in your answers as possible.

We will compile the responses and study them—and we will revert back after the busy period with some of the main findings. More importantly we will use the feedback we get to steer what the practice prioritises in the coming years.

## Contact Us

Give us a call for more information.

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Visit us on the web at

www.farmgateveterinarygroup.ie

**We are holding a series of webinars for farmers over the coming weeks to help advise you on the tasks ahead this spring. We will circulate links to the webinars by text and all are welcome to attend.**

**The first webinar “Preparing for Lambing & managing lameness in Ewes” will take place on **Thursday 6th Thursday at 8pm.****

**The next webinar “Preparing for Calving & calving the Cow” will take place on **Thursday 13th March at 8pm.****