

MOKEE PLASTICS

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Start with clean, draught-free facilities says experienced veterinarian Bert Middleberg.

Cold, draughty sheds a lethal combination

Cold air temperatures will usually not kill young calves. But when combined with a draught, the combination can be lethal says experienced veterinarian Bert Middleberg.

"Light a match in the corner of your calf rearing facility and see if it goes out. You don't want any draughts," he says.

Farmers who rear calves on woolshed grating without other flooring or matting are "asking for trouble", Middleberg says.

He advises rearers to stick with reputable brands of calf milk replacer to avoid any unnecessary challenge, particularly in the first few weeks of life.

Middleberg says around half the cases of scours in calves are caused by rotavirus and another 20% is caused by cryptosporidia. The coccidiosis and salmonella problems normally occur later in the rearing process.

"Because most meals these days have a coccidiostat included in the ration, the problem of coccidiosis doesn't normally show up until after weaning."

He urges rearers to take a

preventative approach to disease in their calves.

A major cause of pneumonia is poor ventilation in sheds allowing an accumulation of ammonia gases. In calves less than a week old, pneumonia often results from navel infection.

"A key factor in navel infection is bruising caused by over-crowding on the transport tray or the truck just after the calves are picked up in the paddock."

Middleberg advises farmers to have 100mm of clean wood shavings, straw or hay on the deck of the tray or truck and allowing enough room for all calves to sit comfortably.

Spraying the navel cord area with tincture of Iodine also helps prevent any infection entering the body.

Calf scours are a major cause of lost production and can be prevented by providing calves with proper housing, adequate nutrition, and special care on arrival, including treatment to prevent any navel infection.

"Success when treating scours in calves relies on early detection and providing the correct treatment. Consulting your veterinarian is worthwhile," Middleberg says.

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