Weaning Healthy Calves

Fred Hopkins
UT Extension Veterinarian
That calf needs to be born in a healthy herd to a healthy cow, managed in a healthy, biosecure environment.

Dee Griffin
GPVEC, 2007
When do Calves Die?

• At birth—2.1%
• Within 24 hours—1.1%
• 24 hours to 3 weeks—1.1%
• 3 weeks to weaning—1.2%

NAHMS 1997
Healthy Cows

• Are vaccinated beginning as calves and continuing in mid pregnancy
• IBR, BVD, PI3, BRSV, Lepto, others
• Body condition scoring
• Dewormed
Healthy Calving Environment

• Restricted calving season
• Not Crowded
• Convenient to check cows and assist calving, quarantine sick animals
• No new additions during calving season
Difficult Births

• Birth to 24 hours is the time calves are most likely to die and most problems are due to difficult calving

• Cows having difficult births are slower to rebreed and wean lighter calves
Handling Difficult Births

• If you are clean and the cow is completely dilated, you can’t help too early.

Figure 20. The end result.
Preventing Calving Losses

- Develop heifers for adequate size
- Use low birth weight EPD bull
- Check cows often
- Assist early
Management after Birth

- Navel dipping
- Castration
- Dehorning
- ID
Colostrum and Calves

- Calves are born without immunity and must get it from first milk.
- Calves born to heifers, assisted births, and mothers slow to accept their calves may not get enough first milk within 16 hours of life.
Treatment of Failure to Get Colostrum

- Colostrum from the mother, another mother who has just calved or purchased colostrum replacement
- 10% of body weight in 2 or more feedings by 24 hours of life.
Vaccination Before 3 Months

- Generally believed that early vaccinations were not effective due to colostral immunity.
- Recent research says that early (4 weeks) vaccinated calf may be more resistant to infection anyway.
- Early vaccination may be useful if early disease is a problem.
Baby Calf Diarrhea

- Isolate the cow and calf
- Give electrolyte mixture to the calf 2 to 4 times a day for 3 days.
- Vaccinate the cow before calving
Vaccinations for Calves

• Today’s vaccines are both safe and effective when stored and used as directed.

• Vaccines must be completed 10 days to 3 weeks before exposure to a disease to be effective.
More Vaccine Facts

• Boosters are important!
• Stress can reduce vaccine effectiveness
Vaccine Care and Use

• Store in refrigerator at 35 to 45° F
• Keep MLV cool and use within 1 hour of mixing
• Use a clean syringe and a sharp needle
MLV vs. Killed vaccines

- Proper use of a vaccine is important whether MLV or Killed
- Killed advantages and disadvantages
- MLV advantages and disadvantages
Blackleg vaccines

- Many combinations
- Beginning at 3 months of age
- Remember booster
Deworming Calves

• Generally, calves over 3 months of age and grazing will benefit from deworming

• Lots of great products are available.
4 way Respiratory

- IBR, BVD, PI3, BRSV
- BVD II?
- Begin at 6 months of age
- Remember booster!
Other Vaccines for Calves

- Mannheimia
- Histophilus
- Moraxella
- Lepto
- Mycoplasma
Mixing Vaccine Types

- MLV followed by killed
- Killed followed by MLV
Preconditioning Programs

• Calves need to be immune before exposure
Tri-State Cow/Calf Conference

The conference is presented under a grant from the Southern Region Risk Management Education Center with additional support from the University of Tennessee Extension, Virginia Cooperative Extension and North Carolina Cooperative Extension.

This material is based upon work supported by USDA/CSREES under Award Number 2007-49200-03891