Respiratory Disease of the Bovine Neonate

Submitted by Dan Van Arsdall on Tue, Apr 26 @ 10am

Respiratory disease is a constant challenge for dairy replacement heifer rearing systems, and is responsible for 21.3% of mortality in preweaned calves and 50.4% of deaths in weaned heifers. There are many negative long-term consequences for survivors of subclinical, clinical, and chronic calf pneumonia including poor growth, reproductive performance, milk production, and longevity. These calves also become sources of infection for other calves, and can cause outbreaks after weaning in group pens. Contamination of the environment with bacterial and viral pathogens is the obvious source of respiratory disease in calves. When reviewing the literature and examining cases seen both in the authors’ hospital and during herd investigations, however, it was realized that treatment and prevention of calf pneumonia has evolved beyond recommendations for antibiotic therapy and vaccination protocols. The high cost of replacement heifers and the development of reproductive technologies have increased the need to detect and treat high-risk neonates suffering from respiratory disease. Many times those calves serve as sentinels for infectious disease that direct calf management decisions on the farm. This article discusses the normal physiologic changes from the uterine environment through parturition and methods to monitor the high-risk or abnormal neonate. Covered are causes of respiratory disease and different strategies for diagnosis and treatment that can be applied to herd investigations or individual animals. All herd investigation tools and forms can be found at the following Web site: http://www.vetmed.wisc.edu/dms/fapm/fapmtools/calves.htm.

Sources:


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