



From the desk of Dr. Chuck Roberts

May 1st, 2017

Spring greetings to everyone! It may be wet, but I have certainly been enjoying the sunshine. This is one of my favorite times of the year as I thoroughly enjoy seeing all of the beef calves out on pasture. Michigan poses certain environmental issues that make raising pasture animals difficult. While we are blessed with extremely productive land and high quality abundant feed, the wetness of spring makes clean, dry calving and neonatal environments very difficult to maintain. Ask any of your dairy neighbors how important this is and you will hear about the importance of environment and the difficulty of providing it for individual animals.

Beef cattle ideally calve in a short window, putting additional stress on the maternity areas used by the herd. Wet environments are the most important stress and exposure for your calves. If you use an indoor area for calving, large amounts of bedding is necessary. Housing areas available only to the calves will aid in providing a clean, dry area for the calf which will greatly help to control energy-draining stress on the calves. These areas greatly reduce the likelihood of respiratory disease, if kept well ventilated and dry. Keeping the area the cows are housed in clean and dry will help to control the incidence and severity of scours. Don't forget where the milk for the calves comes from. We need to keep the feeding equipment very clean. If the cows are bedding in manure-laden pens much of that goes directly to the calf's GI tract via the contaminated udder. Vaccinating the cows with a scour vaccine will improve the ability of the calf to withstand exposure but cannot stop overwhelming exposure. The calf needs to get colostrum within a few hours of birth to help the vaccine to be effective.

Commercial vaccines are available to supplement immunity provided by the colostrum. The vaccines must be given immediately after birth since the colostrum will greatly decrease their effectiveness if consumed prior to vaccination. If the udder is contaminated with manure, all of the "bugs" will have easy access to both the intestines and the blood. Grassy pasture with room to spread out greatly reduces the exposure, however, mud and wetness will increase the energy demand of the calf just to maintain and that energy is then no longer available for the immune system.

Very effective intranasal vaccines are also available to boost the calf's immune response to respiratory disease. Vitamine E and selenium supplementation have also been proven to boost immune function. Adequate mineral supplementation to the brood cows also aids in fully functional immune systems in the newborn calves.

Clinic News

Congratulations to Dr. Stephanie Kozdron—Dr. Stephanie came to Thumb Veterinary Services when she graduated from MSU in 2013, and has worked with all aspects of our clinic including large animal, equine, and companion animal divisions. Dr. Kozdron has accepted a position as a mixed animal practitioner with a clinic in Indiana.

Best wishes to Dr. Stephanie!

Herdsmen Meeting at Clinic

Fresh Cow PE & Disease Diagnosis

Wednesday, May 3rd at 5 PM

Calf Meeting at Clinic

Calving—Techniques in Assistance

Wednesday, May 17th at 5 PM