

Preface



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Guest Editor

Calf health should be a priority on beef and dairy farms. Despite this importance, surveys from the United States and other countries continue to show a preweaned heifer calf mortality rate close to 10% in the dairy industry. Only a small percentage of farms are able to supply adequate numbers of replacement animals from their own herd. Although mortality is slightly less in beef calves, 4% to 5% still die prior to weaning. Other than dystocia, the major causes of mortality in the bovine neonate continue to be the same as they have for decades—diarrhea, respiratory disease, and septicemia.

A renewed emphasis on the calf is occurring globally as diseases (such as bovine spongiform encephalopathy) have restricted animal movement between countries. The demand for beef and dairy heifers is strong, and there are many situations where replacement animals can no longer be imported economically from other countries. There has been a global increase in the importance of calf welfare. Since most of the diseases of the bovine neonate are related primarily to management, improving biosecurity, calf housing, nutrition, and immunity, combined with the early diagnosis and treatment of diseases, will increase the health and welfare of the calf. Producers and veterinarians must re-examine calf management programs at the individual farm level and make changes to improve health and decrease mortality.

This issue of *Veterinary Clinics of North America: Food Animal Practice* was written by ruminant clinicians for the practicing veterinarian. The articles focus on the pathophysiology, clinical signs, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of the major diseases affecting calf health around the world, using the important principles of evidence-based medicine. All authors are internationally recognized specialists in ruminant internal medicine and have published extensively in the field of bovine neonatology. Many advances in bovine neonatology have been made in the past 10 years, and we have attempted to incorporate “state of the art” information in each article.

Conspicuous by its absence, an article dedicated to colostrum management recently was covered in detail in the March 2008 *Veterinary Clinics of North America: Food Animal Practice* issue titled “Dairy Heifer Management.” In many ways, this issue can be viewed as a companion to the “Dairy Heifer Management” issue, with an increased focus on diseases affecting the bovine neonate.

I extend my sincere thanks to all the authors for participating in this project and for sharing their knowledge and clinical experience. I hope that this issue proves to be a useful reference for practitioners in the field.

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