

## NEWS COLUMN

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### **Prevention of Calf Scours**

Some cow/calf producers have already starting calving, however, the bulk of calving begins in March and April in southeast South Dakota. With this in mind, it still gives many producers a chance to properly prepare for calving season.

Calf scours is one of the most common problems coinciding with calving season. Scours affect over 10% of all the calves born annually in South Dakota. Scours is generally referred to as diarrhea in calves under three weeks old. Young calves are most susceptible to strains of *E. coli*, rotavirus, coronavirus and cryptosporidia. Calves over three weeks old are not severely affected by these pathogens, but can be adversely affected by problems such as coccidia.

Whether you agree with it or not, the use of vaccines in scour control is very common for the reduction of infections of *E. coli*, rotavirus and coronavirus. (There is currently no vaccine for cryptosporidia.)

Scour vaccines can be used in two ways: vaccination of the cow before calving to pass antibodies through the colostrum or an oral vaccination of the calf at birth.

Giving the cow a vaccination near calving to increase the antibody level in the colostrum is the most effective for *E. coli* because scours tend to start as infections within the first few days of life. Therefore, antibodies to *E. coli* in the colostrum are able to be ingested by the calf near the time it is going to possibly contract the *E. coli* bacteria.

Rota and coronavirus, on the other hand, can infect calves up to 14 days old. This is well beyond the time when colostrum is taken in. By this time calves are ingesting milk which is dramatically lower in antibody content. In addition, there are various strains of rota and corona. Thus, protection from vaccination can be expected to be less effective.

Vaccination from scours is still recommended in many herds, especially those with scours history. Though the protection is not complete, there is still benefit. Vaccination is not the total answer to solving calf scour problems, but can be part of the solution. Management of animal flow, calving on clean, dry ground, calving heifers separate from cows, separating scouring calves, proper cow nutrition and reduction of herd additions up to and during calving are necessities to be considered in order to seriously contend with scour problems.

For detailed information pertaining to scour problems and vaccination programs, visit with your local veterinarian. They are the professionals and familiar with your individual productions situations.