

North Star Veterinary Services Newsletter

January 2019

Pneumonia

With the temperatures dropping and animals being kept indoors, it is that time of year where we see many pneumonia cases. Pneumonia can be a very serious and often costly disease due to production loss, cost of treatment and withholding times.

The key to solving pneumonia is to implement good preventative measures. Since pneumonia is a complex disease, there are many different factors that come into play and should be addressed. For calves, having good quality and appropriate quantity of colostrum within the first day of life will allow passive transfer of antibodies that will help increase a calf's protection from respiratory pathogens. This is essential to a productive life of a calf and will help prevent many other issues down the road. Like with humans, respiratory disease like the flu is spread via contact with other contaminated animals. For calves and animals in group housing, contaminated group feeders, water bowls and other equipment can facilitate spread. Adequate airflow is also essential to good health. Good airflow helps to remove aerosolized pathogens. During this time of year, animals are typically kept inside and windows and doors are kept closed so the airflow quality is often decreased. This is one of the reasons why calf hutches are used so commonly along with individualized calf care. Another important consideration is nutrition. An animal that is appropriately fed will have the resources to keep their immune systems functioning properly. We also offer a handful of vaccinations that can help reduce the incidence of respiratory disease. Additionally, for those that are buying animals from sale yards, animal transport adds further stress and animals should be vaccinated appropriately long before shipment occurs.

During an outbreak of pneumonia, a simple on farm evaluation and discussion with your veterinarian can be a helpful way to identify areas that could be addressed. Many of these suggestions are simple and cheap management changes that can be easily identified. As stated earlier, prevention and identifying sick animals early in the course of disease and getting them on an appropriate treatment protocol can have significant benefits for both cow and farmer down the road.

When an animal does develop signs of pneumonia, early detection and initiation of treatment is important. Signs of pneumonia include an elevated temperature and one or more of the following : increased respiratory rate, coughing, runny noses, etc. Animals that end up having severe cases can end up with permanent lung damage which in turn will lead to decreased production and loss of potential profits. There are many different antibiotics, treatment options and certain restrictions to consider when choosing a drug. For example, drugs like Resflor and Nuflor can't be used in female dairy animals over 20 months of age while Polyflex and Excenel are typically used for older animals. For larger group outbreaks, another option is Crumbles (chlortetracycline), a prescription antibiotic that you mix into the feed. While all the options can be confusing, please don't hesitate to contact us if you need help treating an animal.

When contacting North Star call 518-483-6223