**Curse of crypto in Co Limerick**

Ciarán Lenehan talked with Limerick BETTER beef farmer Shane Gleeson about his recent outbreak of cryptosporidium in calves.

"I don't mind sharing the details of my bad experience. Others would hide it, but if I can help others to prevent or overcome an outbreak of crypto, it's worth telling the story," he said. "I'm also helping others with colostrum management, as that was the difference eventually. That, and getting calves outside as soon as possible – even in the rain. I got colostrum from a local dairy man and the calves that got that beat the disease. It shows the value of good neighbours and I must commend them for their help, because it made it more difficult for offending organisms to survive."

Shane's calving began on 6 January and he had 42 due in total. On 1 March, as Storm Emma gripped the country, Shane had his first case of cryptosporidium. He began to treat infected calves with Halocur (20ml – 2x 10ml – per day for one week) and as a preventative, went with 10ml daily to all new calves. Weak calves were put on saline drips to rehydrate.

"To prevent crypto, you have to be very diligent with cleaning out calving pens twice weekly, using IV drips to rehydrate very weak calves if necessary (based on veterinary guidance), cleaning out pens twice weekly and get newborn animals outdoors as quickly as possible. Don't handle healthy stock after handling known infected animals. Raise water troughs to at least 0.75m off the ground. Steam-cleaning sheds between calving seasons will also help to prevent reoccurrence. Do this early on after calving and allow sheds to dry over the summer. Effective disinfectants against crypto-sporidium: 2% to 3% Xennox, 2% to 4% Neopredil, 10% Ox-Virin, 3% hydrogen peroxide."

**Steps to take**

- Isolate infected calves and their dams.
- Vaccinating cows (Rotavec Corona) can help as it is often a combination of crypto and another viral scour that causes high mortality rates. Colostrum management is crucial for immunity here.
- Administer Halocur for seven days and isolate recovered animals from the rest of the flock for a further seven days (note Halocur is POM).
- Continue to feed infected calves as normal if they will drink and offer oral rehydration solutions on top of this (two to three litres daily).
- Use Halocur prophylactically (as a preventative) on other calves.
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**How to beat crypto**

Crypto scour is parasite-based and generally occurs in the second week of life. It can be hugely difficult to eradicate as many disinfectants do not work against it. An infected calf will shed billions of crypto eggs – only 10 are needed to establish an infection. Older animals can act as reservoirs for the disease, without themselves showing signs of infection. It is transmitted via the faecal-oral route.

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