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# DAIRY NEWSLETTER

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## Calcium Bolus Use at the Time of Calving

Hypocalcemia is mostly associated with a down cow after calving, otherwise known as milk fever. But recent research has shown that hypocalcemia can exist in cows that still remain standing, and can have other detrimental health and welfare effects. All farms should have a comprehensive plan in place to prevent hypocalcemia, but also to treat the disorder quickly and effectively, in all cows, whether they remain standing or not.

Hypocalcemia has been shown to reduce feed intake, increase the cow's risk of developing a displaced abomasum, decrease milk yield and increase susceptibility to infectious diseases during the fresh period. Many producers are now using oral calcium boluses at calving, in second lactation or greater animals, to help mitigate the risk of fresh cow problems. The recommended dosing strategy is to give one bolus at time of calving and another bolus 12 hours later. The advantages of this product include its ease of use and the sustained release of calcium over 12-18 hours, compared to Calcium borogluconate given IV or under the skin, boosts calcium levels in the blood for only 4-6 hours.

In certain instances hypocalcemic cows that remain down or refractory to treatment have been given three or more boluses and have subsequently developed severe watery diarrhea. It is suspected that greater than 3 calcium boluses over the course of a couple days alters the pH of the gut and leads to overgrowth of bacteria, resulting in diarrhea. Therefore, it is recommended not to give a fresh cow more than 3 boluses. If the cow still requires calcium supplementation after this point, a product like Theracalcium or Calcium Borogluconate under the skin is a safer and a more appropriate treatment strategy. It is often advisable to collect and check a blood sample to check calcium as well as phosphorus levels as this can also contribute to down cow syndrome. Don't hesitate to discuss calcium supplementation protocols with your herd veterinarian to develop a strategy that best suits your farm.

### Take Home Messages

- Calcium boluses are a great method of preventing fresh cow problems related to hypocalcemia
- DO NOT administer more than 3 boluses as it can cause diarrhea
- Collect blood to run Calcium, Magnesium and Phosphorus in clinic





April 2017

## ProAction Updates

### ~~ Program Changes and New In Class Training Dates ~~

#### Changes to the Traceability Module

DFO has informed us that the traceability module requirement for **REPORTING** all animal births, animal arrivals on farm and tag retirement, to the National CLIA website has **temporarily** been made a recommendation only.

Until additional changes are made, DFO FSRs will only be checking to make sure you have **RECORDED** all of the necessary information for these animal movement activities.

We continue to recommend that all producers, if able, set up an account with the CLIA at [www.clia.livestockid.ca](http://www.clia.livestockid.ca) and start or continue to report this information, as this is an important step within the traceability chain, **and it will become mandatory once again in the not too distant future!**

If you have any questions regarding this change, please do not hesitate to contact us at the Kirkton Vet Clinic.



#### More ProAction training sessions have been planned for:

--- Wednesday April 12<sup>th</sup> – 9:30am-12:30 ---

--- Wednesday April 19<sup>th</sup> – 9:30am-12:30 ---

Both sessions will be held at the St. Marys Veterinary Clinic. Refreshments will be provided. Please continue to park in the vacant parking lot adjacent to the clinic. If you would like to attend one of these sessions, please RSVP to the Kirkton Veterinary Clinic 519-229-8911 or 1-888-443-4184. Spaces are limited.