

## MILL CREEK VETERINARY SERVICES: HERD HEALTH TIPS

### E. coli K99

**E. coli K99** is one of the most common causes of disease in newborn calves 1-7 days old. Infected calves usually get diarrhea and often die. Treatment consists primarily of electrolytes/fluids, antibiotics, and G.I. protectants. This is a bacteria found in the environment of cows, especially in manure. **Prevention** is the best way to control this disease, and includes:

1. Vaccination program for dry cows. Vaccinate cows at dry-off (can be from 3 weeks to 6 months before calving) with **Piligaurd** or similar vaccine. Colostrum from vaccinated cows given to calves dramatically reduces incidence of disease.
- 2.. Feed high quality colostrum (1 gallon) to newborn calves within **12** hours of birth. Fresh colostrum is preferable. High quality colostrum can be frozen 2-3 years and maintain original antibody levels. Test colostrum for quality before feeding with a colostrometer.
3. Provide a clean maternity area.
4. Clean and disinfect calf feeding equipment thoroughly between use and replace with new equipment as necessary (diseases are often spread via common feeding equipment). Maintain approx 5-10% more calf feeding utensils than needed for use as replacements.

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Until herd vaccination programs and other preventative measures take effect, other ways to help control E. coli K99 include:

1. Give all calves **Genecol 99** orally within 12 hours of birth. This is a commercial K99 antibody source and can be somewhat expensive.
2. Because E. coli is a bacteria, you can also try giving calves prophylactic antibiotics at birth until disease is under control. It is not advised to continue this practice for extended periods of time, as antibiotic resistance can develop and calves will no longer respond to treatment. **Trimethoprim-Sulfa** combination drugs are often effective as an initial choice for this use. Follow labeled instructions and withdrawal periods.

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Adequate colostrum intake is extremely important in calf survival rates regarding all types of disease. Ideally 95% of the calves should be getting good colostrum antibody transfer. If this is not occurring, the calves either did not get enough colostrum, got poor quality colostrum, and/or received the colostrum too late in life for full benefit. Routine screening of calf blood samples is advised to monitor colostrum transfer.

CONSULT WITH YOUR VETERINARIAN REGARDING ANY QUESTIONS