



# Tern Vets Ltd

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PUTTING CARE INTO PRACTICE

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## OFFICE HOURS:

Mon-Fri 08.30-18.00

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Your dedicated farm  
team available 24/7



## CALF PNEUMONIA - A REVIEW

**At this time of year calf pneumonia might be the last thing on your mind - but it is a great time to reflect on last years calf health issues and plan ahead for this year.**

Calf pneumonia is primarily a viral disease. There are four main viruses that contribute to pneumonia in calves:

- PI3 (Parainfluenza Type 3)
- RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus)
- IBR (Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis)
- BVD (Bovine Viral Diarrhoea)



PI3, RSV and IBR cause disease by physically damaging the calf's natural defences, including paralysing the little hairs (cilia) lining the throat and damaging the cells which secrete mucus, both designed to stop disease-causing particles getting into the lungs. Once these defences are damaged, bacteria can penetrate more deeply into the respiratory system and cause further disease. BVD does not cause physical damage to the respiratory system, but attacks the immune system and causes generalised immunosuppression which means that the calf's immune system is not able to fight off other viruses or bacteria very well, and the animal is more likely to succumb to disease.

Once the primary virus has done its damage the secondary bacteria can then invade - the most common secondary bacteria invaders are:

- *Pasteurella multocida*
- *Haemophilus somnus*
- *Mannheimia haemolytica*
- *Mycoplasma bovis*



### Clinical Signs:

The most obvious clinical sign of pneumonia in calves is coughing. This, however, may be one of the later signs to develop and, by the time it does, a great deal of damage may have already occurred within the respiratory tract. The more damage that has occurred by the time an animal is treated, the more likely it will be to suffer long lasting effects.

### DID YOU KNOW?

On average 30% of all cattle have a clinical case of pneumonia during their lifetime but about 75% of cattle show signs of lung damage at the slaughterhouse. This suggests that a huge amount of damage is happening before the animals ever show 'typical' signs of pneumonia. The sooner we can detect pneumonia by picking up subtle signs of illness, the more likely it will be that the animal makes a good recovery.

Early, subtle signs of pneumonia to look for include:

- Separation from the rest of the group
- Being slow or reluctant to come for food
- Runny eyes
- Runny nose
- Drooping ears
- Increased respiratory rate or effort



If you notice any of these signs, take a few temperatures - we sell digital thermometers which give an accurate temperature in 3 seconds at the practice if you don't have one already. An increased body temperature over 103°F or 39.5°C can show the animal is fighting an infection and may require treatment. Ideally, animals under treatment for pneumonia should be isolated in a separate air space from the rest of the group as the pneumonia bugs are highly contagious. If large numbers of animals within an air space are affected (>30% of a group) then we may recommend that all the animals are treated with appropriate antibiotic and anti-inflammatory medications.

### Prevention:

There are a number of factors at play when it comes to protecting your calves against pneumonia, and even in a perfect shed calves may still struggle if they have not had enough colostrum in the first 24-48 hours of life. **Colostrum management underpins everything when it comes to calf health. Newborn calves should receive 6L of good quality colostrum within the first 6 hours of life, split over two feeds.** Good quality colostrum provides the calf with antibodies to diseases which they may encounter on farm, and kick-starts the development of an effective immune system.

**DID YOU KNOW?** We can check colostrum uptake on your farm by taking a quick blood sample from calves under a week old - we spin the blood at the practice and check the level of Total Protein in it which correlates to the amount of colostrum that has been taken up into the blood of the calf. You get the results the same day and it is a really effective tool in monitoring colostrum success.

### Key risk factors for pneumonia include:

★ ONLY £4/CALF ★

- **High stocking densities of animals in sheds:** This allows for easier transfer of pathogens between animals, and the stress of being overstocked can lead to immunosuppression.
- **Mixing of age groups:** Disease will commonly pass from older animals to younger animals, who are usually less able to cope with the pathogens they encounter.
- **Poorly ventilated sheds:** Smoke bombs can be a good visual aid to help determine whether air flow is adequate.
- **Draughts:** These can lead to young calves becoming chilled, and spending their energy on staying warm rather than growing and maintaining an effective immune system.
- **Wet bedding:** This encourages pathogen survival, as well as an increase in ammonia in the air, which can damage the respiratory tract.
- **Dust:** Particles from dusty bedding can cause physical damage to the respiratory tract.

Pneumonia vaccines can play an important role in boosting the calves immunity but must be used alongside good calf management - you cannot vaccinate your way out of a poorly ventilated shed!

***Call us at the practice if you would like any further information.***

## WARNING ABOUT KEXXTONE AND DOGS

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) received a number of reports last year involving dogs and accidental exposure to Kexxtone boluses. The active ingredient in Kexxtone, monensin, is very toxic to dogs and can cause neurological signs and death. Affected dogs have so far been mainly farm dogs, but dogs walking on footpaths could also be at risk from ingestion of regurgitated boluses. Other species can be affected too, and the VMD has issued the following warning: 'Do not allow dogs, horses, other equines or guinea fowl access to formulations containing monensin. Due to the risk of bolus regurgitation, do not allow these species access to areas where treated cattle have been kept. Ingestion or oral exposure to monensin can be fatal in these species'.