

Herd Health Planning

Pneumonia



Pneumonia is an expensive and serious threat to cattle. Even a 2% mortality rate can reduce potential gross margin by 10%. Each animal that gets pneumonia may lose up to 4 weeks growth and some will not thrive because of chronic lung damage and pleurisy. The stress of weaning and of housing increases the susceptibility of calves to respiratory diseases and pneumonia in particular.

What is pneumonia?

Pneumonia is an inflammation of the lungs that results from the response of the animal to an infectious agent, which can either be a virus or bacteria, or in many cases both. The main signs are:

- Rapid shallow breathing (panting)
- High temperatures (over 102.5°F or 39.2°C)
- Coughing
- Loss of appetite
- Discharges from the nose (clear or purulent).

Pneumonia has several different causes and varies in severity from mild to rapidly fatal and, as many know from bitter experience, it can be unpredictable.

What are the common causes of pneumonia?

- IBR (Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis);
- RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus)
- PI3 (Parainfluenza 3)

Often the virus infection causes tissue damage and bacteria eg *Pasteurella haemolytica* and *Pasteurella multocida* then invade the damaged tissues.

Don't forget that lungworm can cause pneumonia and anthelmintic dosing history should be taken into consideration.

How is pneumonia treated?

- Antibiotics have no effect on viruses (IBR, PI3, etc.) and will only kill bacteria if that particular strain of bacteria is susceptible to the antibiotic being used and the dosage is correct. Bacteria can develop resistance to certain antibiotics making treatment ineffective.
- Discuss the best approach to the treatment of pneumonia with your vet. Come up with a plan to identify pneumonia cases and which treatment to use, how many days to treat and what to do if treatment is not successful.
- Your vet may also prescribe treatment to reduce the inflammation or to make breathing easier. Make sure you know the withdrawal times of any treatments used.

How do I reduce the risk of pneumonia?

- **Reduce Stress** - Minimise the stress around weaning. Introduce creep feeding at least one month before weaning to avoid the stress of sudden ration changes. Try to avoid housing and weaning at the same time. Keep handling and transport of calves to a minimum. Dehorn and castrate suckled calves at least one month before weaning.
- **Good Housing** – Poor ventilation increases the risk of getting pneumonia and also the severity of the disease as disease organisms build up in the air. Ensure there is good ventilation without being draughty. Avoid overcrowding to reduce the spread of pneumonia.
- **Vaccination** - Vaccinating 6-7 weeks before weaning or housing gives a good level of immunity and is the best form of protection. Get advice from your vet to decide if a vaccination programme is required, and, if so, what to vaccinate against.

Herd health planning - pneumonia decisions

Is there a problem?

Date: _____

Results – this year	Number	Percentage	Target for next year
No. of cattle housed			
No. treated for pneumonia			
No. of losses			
No. of chronic poor thrivers			
Other pneumonia cases			
Dates of pneumonia outbreaks			

Is any action planned? Yes/No

Vaccination			
Cause of Pneumonia	Target groups	Dates	Product
PI3 (Parainfluenza 3)			None
RSV (Respiratory syncytial virus)			None
IBR (Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis)			Ibepur
BVD (Bovine Virus Diarrhoea)			None
Pasteurellosis			None

Building design				
	Size	Area / animal	Target	Action
Floor area				
Air inlet area				
Air outlet area				
Draughts			None	
Other issues				

Reducing stress

Introduce creep feeding before weaning

Yes/No

Plans to avoid ration changes

Yes/No

Wean before housing

Yes/No

Dehorn and castrate calves at least one month before weaning.

Date:

Plans to minimize handling and transport:

Purchase policy

Buy stock from IBR Accredited herds in the CHeCS Health Scheme

Find out health status of the herd of origin

Herd health planning pneumonia review date: _____