

Keeping Calves Healthy

Aaron Hyland

With spring comes a very exciting yet stressful time of year for many Rawlins county cattle producers and that's calving season! After all of the time and effort spent making sure a calf comes into this world safely and has a good start, producers still need to be vigilant about each calf's health. One of the main threats to a young calf's health is scours and prevention is the key to minimize the problems associated with scours. KSU Beef Cattle Institute veterinarians, Bob Larson and Brad White offer several tips for keeping a herd free from scours.

Scours, otherwise known as diarrhea, often impact calves in the first month of life, in part because of their liquid diet of milk and developing immune system, Larson said. If the calves lose too many electrolytes, they may develop metabolic acidosis, which can be fatal if not promptly treated.

"The calf is most susceptible to scours in the first few weeks of life. After that, they are pretty resilient to becoming severely ill," Larson said.

Management tips offered by the veterinarians for preventing scours include:

- Make sure the calves are kept in a sanitary environment to prevent exposure to the pathogens that cause scours to develop and spread in the herd.
- Maintain older calves in a separate location from younger calves to reduce the in-herd disease transmission.
- Keep the cows in good body condition so they pass the immunity to their calves through the first milk, known as colostrum.
- Vary the feeding locations to spread out the calves and keep them from congregating with the other cattle.