

Keeping Heifers (and the future) Healthy

Heifers are universally described as the future of the dairy herd. In an ideal world, we would have plenty of heifers every year to choose from as replacements for the herd, so much so that our heifers would always be of greater genetic potential than those leaving the herd. Unfortunately, it seems that there are never enough of them born in the first place and then to lose them in the early weeks pre-weaning seems to set the dairy farmer back to an almost plodding rate of improvement.

Three of the biggest killers of heifer calves in the rearing program are Coccidiosis, Salmonella and E.Coli. These three microscopic organisms are present in all rearing environments and can be especially virulent when conditions are favourable and animals are intensely housed. In seasons such as we are currently experiencing when conditions are wetter than usual and animals are intensely housed and are all feeding from a single trough, Salmonella and E.Coli in particular effect more than the usual number of calves.

Recent developments have seen the strategic use of Salmonella and E.Coli control measures in calf feeds to inhibit the infectious spread of these pathogens. For many years, combinations of short chain fatty acids have been known to inhibit these bacteria, and these are now used extensively in the pig and poultry industries where animals are intensely housed. Fysal® MP is one such product combining organic acids to control contamination of feed and decontaminate infected areas where feed comes into contact with the pathogens. The challenge presented to young calves (as is the case with all young animals) is high infection pressure when the animal is least able to resist. The bacterial challenge is in the environment and can be introduced via feed, water and environment.

The addition of Fysal MP is aimed at reducing risk from these areas. The inclusion of organic acids in calf starter rations is aimed at countering the buffering capacity, providing protection in the feed, protection against contamination and contributing to control in the animal, ultimately meaning fewer animals succumb to these deadly pathogens. For more information on how Salmonella and E.Coli risk can be reduced, contact Reid Langdon Pty Ltd on 1300 331 425