

2. ANIMAL HEALTH

Minimising pneumonia

Reducing stress is an important factor in minimising the possibility of a pneumonia outbreak challenge in weaned suckler calves. Creep feeding before weaning and gradual weaning can help in this aspect. During the housing period, calves should not be overstocked in pens and should be provided with adequate feeding space - 500mm/head for 300kg calves reduced to 125mm/head if ad-lib feeding.

Clipping a strip 150-200mm wide along the calves' backs can help to prevent sweating when calves are housed. It is not advisable to perform a number of management practices all on the same day, such as weaning, housing and dehorning, as this will subject calves to greater stress, reduce their immunity and increase the possibility of a pneumonia outbreak.

If the farm has a history of pneumonia, or if the weather is humid and calm, a pneumonia vaccination programme should be considered. There are a number of viruses which cause pneumonia in calves and often all of them may be involved in an outbreak. Vaccinations for single and multiple strains of viruses can now be obtained and the need for a vaccination programme should be discussed with your vet. Always consult with your vet before administering any course of medicine to confirm the diagnosis and treatment.

Ventilation is also important in pneumonia prevention.

It is unwise to vaccinate calves against pneumonia and then put them into a poorly



designed house with little or no ventilation. Contact your local Beef and Sheep adviser for further information on building design.