

**Preventing & Treating Calf Pneumonia**, by Hue Karreman, VMD, Penn Dutch Cow Care  
From *The Moo News*, <http://www.penndutchcowcare.org/pages/newsletters.html>

We are beginning the peak pneumonia season for calves right now (Nov-April). This is minimized by raising calves outside of the main milking barn wherever there is plenty of circulating fresh air. Individual hutches are best but calf kennels are OK also. Critical to any area where calves are raised is DRY bedding. If there is damp/spongy bedding mixed with chilly overcast weather the calves will more likely get a respiratory infection. Dry bedding is critical - how would you like it if you had damp sheets and blankets for your bedding? If using sawdust now, switch to fodder/straw for better insulation.

Calves with a dry cough but eating well and looking bright should grab your attention and you should monitor them fairly closely for a few days. Take some temperatures and see if a fever is happening. Normal cow temperatures range between 100.5 and 102.5. Temperatures in the 105-106 range usually indicate a viral challenge to the calf and the fever indicates that the animal is actively fighting the infection. If the animal is bright and alert and eating, do not necessarily try to drop the fever with forceful anti-pyretics like aspirin and flunixin (Banamine®). However, if the animal is droopy and not eating, dropping the fever will benefit the critter by making it feel better enough to probably start eating and taking in nutrients so that it can fend off the infection better in general if possible. In viral infections (as indicated by high fever), antibiotics are of no primary use. Botanical or homeopathic remedies like Aconite (recent onset) and Belladonna (fever with throbbing heart beat, reddish pink dry mouth, dilated pupils) are more in order. Wet coughs would indicate Antimonium tart, if early in the infection. Immune boosting substances would be very valuable. Substances which have demonstrated immune enhancing qualities include some biologics and botanicals. Immunoboost® stimulates interferon which positively impacts the animal's non-specific immune system and the hyper-immune plasma I've developed essentially transfers some of the donor cow's enhanced immune system to the recipient animal. A dose of vitamin E/selenium or vitamin A, D, E combination would also be good. Ginseng has been shown to increase the immune system in some studies on cattle (shown by decreasing the SCC in Staph cows) while goldenseal, barberry and wild indigo all have potent berberine alkaloids that are proven to be anti-microbial. Garlic with its sulfur based allicin and derivatives have anti-microbial activities. It should be noted that echinacea has been shown in many studies to be not effective during actual infection but can help to prevent infections to a certain point. Therefore, use echinacea on a continuous basis at this time of year and don't just reach for it when an infection actually occurs. Antibiotics can be excellent for bacterial pneumonia, but if an organic animal is given an antibiotic, it is banished from organic production forever. (Dr. Karreman has his dairy veterinary practice in Quarryville, Pennsylvania. He is a regular contributor to the ODairy electronic discussion list. Email: [penndutch@earthlink.net](mailto:penndutch@earthlink.net) His website includes archived monthly newsletters, <http://www.penndutchcowcare.org> If you would like to buy some health care products, or cannot email, call 717-529-0155.)

**Ventilation & Calves:** A quick way to know if your calves are getting adequate air movement and air exchange is to **get down where they are and try to breathe!** While you're down there you'll notice any dampness, drafting, ammonia, mold or other unfriendly conditions for young animals – and people! Calf stalls, pens & hutches should be checked several times daily, - and cleaned & bedded as needed to allow **plenty of dry bedding for calves all to lie down at once!** Lie down where they have to – or if you won't, get going with the fork & bedding.... ASAP!  
+Willie Gibson, NOFA-VT Farm Advisor