

Managing a *Mycoplasma bovis* outbreak



How should I manage an animal with *Mycoplasma bovis*?

Mycoplasmas can be difficult to treat and treatment needs to start early to have a chance to be successful.

- It is important to decide on an appropriate choice of antibiotic, in line with veterinary advice, to target treatment to the necessary animals at the right stage, and to monitor them. However there are growing levels of antimicrobial resistance to *Mycoplasma bovis*.
- If the positive animal is lactating, their milk should not be fed to calves. Pasteurisation of whole milk, where it is being fed, is essential. Carrier cows should be segregated and culled, to reduce the likelihood of further cases occurring.
- Isolate positive cases in an area with a separate airspace and with separate drainage.

What different options are available to control *Mycoplasma bovis* in a herd?

The control of *Mycoplasma bovis* in a herd is challenging, however some steps can be taken to reduce the risk of spread. Importantly *Mycoplasma* infection outbreaks are often part of a multifactorial infection picture. Identifying and addressing other factors or infections that may be present (eg poor colostrum transfer of immunity, or other respiratory infections) is important and will improve the likelihood of a more rapid and successful outcome.

When *Mycoplasma bovis* is present in a herd, it is important to:

- apply general disease control principles
- have a health plan pre-housing
- work closely with your vet – managing a *Mycoplasma* outbreak can be a stressful time.

Calf care

- Maximise immunity: ensure colostrum quality, feed correct quantities at the right time
- Feed youngest calves first
- Feed pasteurised milk
- Avoid over-crowding, maintain excellent hygiene of calf pens and feeding equipment
- Reduce immunosuppression (eg due to BVD, salmonella, parasites)
- Reduce stressors (eg due to transport, poor feed or air quality)
- Avoid temperature fluctuations as much as possible.

As a general principle to improve calf health, it is important to keep calf group size small with a narrow age range, to have an all-in all-out system where possible and to keep calf accommodation as hygienic as possible.

Milking herd measures

- Reduce the risk of spread at milking by having excellent hygiene
- Check cows carefully for evidence of mastitis and/or high somatic cell counts. Make sure that milk samples are taken aseptically and change gloves between cows
- Submit bulk tank samples regularly for PCR testing, even after obvious cases are culled Leave infected cows to the end of milking
- Carry out post-milking teat disinfection, using the proper technique.