

Housing Checklist

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Pneumonia

By using intranasal vaccines and vaccinating before weaning and housing, protection is in place before the impending high risk period. Vaccination can play an important role in protecting against the infectious agents that cause pneumonia. Vaccination works in two ways:

- Increasing the calves' immunity so they are better protected.
- Reducing the challenge, as vaccination reduces the amount of virus the calves breathe out, hence reducing viral levels in the shed.

The most appropriate vaccination protocol will depend on a number of factors, including the age of the calf, and how quickly protection is needed.

Other environmental improvements such as reducing drafts but maintaining good ventilation, minimising stressors and ensuring you use good quality bedding all contribute to reducing the risk of an outbreak. You should speak to your vet to discuss the best plan for your farm.

Treat for parasites

You want to house your cattle free from all parasites including worms, fluke, mange and lice. You can use faecal egg count tests to detect if there is a worm burden and you should then discuss an appropriate treatment plan with your vet. Ensure all treatments are delivered within plenty of time before your planned housing date.



Forage analysis

Speak to your vet to arrange an analysis of the silage you plan to feed through the winter to check nutritional value and for any vitamin/mineral deficiencies.

Transitioning on to a new diet

To allow the rumen time to adjust, all cattle at grass should be gradually offered concentrates over several weeks before housing. For young cattle due to be weaned, you can start offering a creep feed up to six weeks before. Allowing the rumen to adjust to a changing diet reduces the risk of gastro-issues such as stomach ulcers and acidosis.



Pregnancy Diagnosis

Our vets are busy this time of year performing pregnancy diagnosis in spring calving suckler cows. Carrying this out before or soon after housing allows early identification of empty cows, thereby allowing removal from the herd and savings on feeding over winter.



Record cows BCS at housing

Body condition scoring represents the best guide to the correct feeding of suckler cows. The dry period is the best time to add/remove condition to/from your spring calving cows. Your cows should be condition score 3-3.5 at housing (weaning) and 2.5 -3 in the run up to calving, but the later you leave trying to alter the condition of your cows the more you risk large calves if putting condition on, and poor quality colostrum if trying to remove condition.

Environment

Provision of shelter, adequate ventilation and good hygiene are all important aspects of housing for adult and youngstock. Your vets can be on hand to advise how to assess your buildings and identify potential areas for improvement.

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