



## RETAINED AFTERBIRTH

If a cow has not expelled the afterbirth within 24 hours, there are a few possible causes. The fallout from retained cleanings are uterine infections and poor reproductive performance leading to vet call outs.

- Twin births and cows with difficult calving have an increased prevalence
- Poor immune status due to vitamin and trace mineral deficiency
- Dehydration - offer cows a large bucket of clean, warm water or post calving drink straight after calving (e.g. Reviva)
- If there is sub-clinical milk fever the cow's uterus may stop functioning and may not expel the afterbirth



## CALVING 2021

The key to maximising output in 2021 is having a healthy, fertile and productive cow with a healthy calf. Optimising the use of grass in the system while not underfeeding the cow in early lactation is the cornerstone of good fertility and the aim is to minimise body condition loss in the first six weeks after calving. Two of the most common problems in freshly calved cows relate to **Milk Fever** and **Retained Cleanings**. If you have either of these problems please talk to your Bretts Sales Representative.



## MILK FEVER

Milk fever normally occurs within the first few days of calving. The cause is a reduced concentration of blood calcium known as Hypocalcaemia. The disease is more prominent in herds with a high degree of jersey genetics, cows calving with excess body condition and older cows. If a cow goes down this is a clinical case. Sub-clinical cases are those where the cow struggles on but will show other problems such as slow calving or retained afterbirth.

- Most cases occur one day after calving due to colostrum draining blood calcium reserves. As a result, cows require additional supplementation via injection or high concentration of oral calcium (Reviva or a calcium bolus).
- The dry cow diet is important in reducing the risk of milk fever as it 'tunes' the cow's metabolism for efficient calcium absorption. During the dry period, a cow requires magnesium and vitamin D3 which 'programs' the cow to put calcium away in reserve for post calving.
- Silages high in potash (greater than 2.5% K) increase the risk of milk fever.
- Fatter cows are at a greater risk than thinner animals.



## The 5 'Cs' of Successful Calf Rearing

**The key to successful calf rearing is keeping things simple, having a plan and getting the basics right.**

- 1) **Colostrum** - remember the 1,2,3 rule which is the first feed of colostrum within the first 2 hours of birth and a minimum of 3 litres
- 2) **Comfort** - calves need a dry, draught free, warm bed with plenty of straw and good ventilation above them
- 3) **Consistency** - feed calves at the same time each day and ensure the milk replacer powder is measured accurately and whole milk volumes offered are accurate, check automatic feeders
- 4) **Cleanliness** - all milk feeding equipment must be washed daily and anyone visiting the calf shed should have clean boots dipped in disinfectant
- 5) **Calories** - calves require daily feed to maintain function, keep them hydrated and contribute to daily growth

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## BRETT BROTHERS HAVE A NEW RECRUIT!



We would like to introduce Paul Colgan, the newest member of the Agronomy Team at Brett Brothers. From Johnswell, Co. Kilkenny, Paul joined the team in July 2020 to manage harvest and seed production. Hailing from a dairy background Paul has years of experience operating machinery and spraying crops while working for agricultural contractors. After a six-year spell on a tillage farm in Western Australia, Paul returned home to further his education and recently completed an honours degree in Agricultural Science in WIT. Paul joins the agronomy team as Assistant Agronomist to follow his passion for cereal and grass crops. Paul is a qualified Pesticide Advisor and will work alongside James Irish and Matt Gartland assisting growers to maximise their crops potential.

Paul can be contact on  
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## TAKE CONTROL OF RAGWORT

February is the onset of spring and as soil temperatures gradually increase it is the start of the growing season. February to mid-March is the best time to take control of Ragwort as this allows for the weed to completely die back before livestock are allowed in for grazing. Along with reducing grass production and quality, Ragwort is also a noxious weed that must be controlled under cross compliance rules. It is a biennial weed forming a rosette of crumpled leaves with purple stems in year one and pushing up a long stem with yellow flowers and seeds in year two. Ragwort contains alkaloid poison which can kill cattle and horses by causing liver damage when eaten in grass or silage.

### Control and Removal

Ragwort is a plant, which if not controlled, can lead to a large infestation in fields in a short period. An integrated control strategy combining both biological and chemical is needed, this may take two years due to the bank of seeds emerging at different stages. Ragwort needs to be controlled at the rosette stage in year one. Plants that are at an advanced stage (year two) need to be physically pulled and removed from the field and destroyed. If you have a problem with Ragwort, contact a member of the Brett Brothers Agronomy Team to help assess the affected fields and provide the best solution available to control the spread of ragwort.

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