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Calf Scours: A Survey of Producers in Southern Australia

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Abstract

The incidence, significance and some costs of calf scours in Southern Australia was examined by a representative telephone survey of 376 beef producers across four regions in December 2005. The research identified that 16% of beef producers consider the condition either a significant or very significant issue. Incidence of scours in calves under 16 weeks was estimated by producers to vary with age, but peaked at around 8% of calves in the 6 day to 20 day old age group. Mortality was estimated to be 1.5% in this group of calves. Producers estimated that they spent an average of \$212 on products and services to treat calves for scours, an average of 85 minutes per treated calf and estimated that 8% of calves failed to thrive after scouring. These appear to represent significant costs to industry. The results of this study will benefit the meat and livestock industry by providing base data to examine associations between estimated incidence of scours and possible risk factors that were surveyed. This may provide data that will allow the development of strategies to reduce the incidence and cost of the condition. The study also provides a benchmark for the condition in 2005 and when repeated, will allow the industry to reassess its position and change strategies if needed.