

Let's get rid of that winter cold for good

With the winter season for coughs and colds approaching Chris Just from Westpoint Farm Vets gives thought to one of the common causes:

What do human cold sores and snotty nosed calves have in common? - They are both in the herpes virus family. Cold sore sufferers will know that if they are feeling a bit under the weather or worn out, a cold sore will develop just to add to their woes. This is because the herpes virus family have a canny habit of going "latent"; once the immune system has tried to fight them off they effectively disappear out of sight until they see an opportune moment to spring back into action again. This is usually when you are under stress which annoyingly suppresses our immune systems activity, one of nature's design faults unfortunately!

Snotty nosed calves are often suffering from a combination of viruses and bacteria – the latter usually making the most of the damage done by the viruses as a way in. One of the most common viral culprits is IBR (Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis for those want to know!). IBR is a bovine herpes virus, so much like the dreaded cold sore it hides in certain carrier animals resulting in the constant perpetuation of infection in a herd. There are several strains of IBR which vary from causing little/no obvious damage to fatal tracheitis (windpipe infection).



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IBR classically appears as runny red eyes and snotty noses, but in many cases it isn't so clear at all – it may be part of a pneumonia problem or less obviously reduced growth rates or milk yields. The majority of UK herds will have the virus so it is another thing to be wary of when buying stock in and should be part of a biosecurity plan. Fortunately we can vaccinate against it but as exposed animals are likely to be lifelong carriers, it is not a simple disease to clear from your herd permanently. Vaccinating will help animals to control the virus and protect those which haven't been infected – so over time it will start to be eliminated. The IBR vaccines are the first "marker" vaccines – which mean that laboratory tests can differentiate vaccinated animals from

natural infection. Using such marker vaccines and testing technology several of our European neighbours have successfully eradicated IBR and several others are in the process of doing so. Sadly, although we have the same tools, there is currently no desire in the UK to follow suit; but don't let that stop you being more proactive by eradicating IBR from your farm and getting rid of at least one of those causes of winter colds for good.

For further information, please contact our Launceston practice on 01566 86985, or visit www.westpointfarmvets.co.uk.

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