

DAIRY VETERINARY NEWSLETTER


January 2016

A Change in Necropsy Fees at the Utah Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory

The following memorandum is from Dr. Tom Baldwin, Director of the Utah Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory:



Memorandum

TO: Veterinarians that utilize the UVDL
FROM: Tom Baldwin 
DATE: 11/25/2015
RE: Necropsy prices

In order to allow pathologists/veterinary diagnosticians at the UVDL to order necessary ancillary tests on necropsy submissions, a new pricing schedule is being implemented. Except for companion animals, the base price for necropsy services remains unchanged; in the case of companion animals it has increased by \$20. Rather than just listing a base price as in the past, a price range is now provided. In all cases, the *total amount actually invoiced will depend on the number of ancillary tests* ordered by the UVDL veterinary pathologist/diagnostician. Certainly most necropsy submissions will be invoiced near the lower end of the range. UVDL pathologists/diagnosticians will not exceed the upper price limit without first consulting with submitting clinics. Consequently, effective December 1, 2015, prices for necropsies will be quoted as:

Livestock (food and fiber)

< 300 lb = \$60 to \$150/animal
300 – 1000 lb = \$105 to \$180/animal
>1000 lb = \$120 to \$200/animal

Companion animals

Any weight = \$80 to \$160/animal

Horses, llamas, alpacas, and other recreational animals

< 200 lb = \$60 to \$150/animal

≥ 200 lb = \$130 to \$200/animal

Avian species

Pet/hobby birds = \$30 to \$85/animal

Non-commercial poultry (small backyard flocks) = \$30 to \$85/animal

Commercial fowl and game bird flocks = \$60 to \$120 for up to 5 birds; thereafter \$10 to \$40/bird

Small mammals (rabbits, rodents, mink, etc.) and reptiles

Any weight = \$30 to \$85/animal

Dr. Baldwin relates that if there are any questions regarding the new fee ranges, please call the UVDL at (435) 797-1895.

Warming Rooms for Newborn Calves - Should Every Dairy Have Them?

I have always thought that it is amazing that beef calves and sometimes dairy calves that I have seen (or helped deliver when I was in practice) born outside in very cold weather and snow survive at all. They certainly can, but it seems like a rough start in the world. What about dairy calves born in the “indoor” maternity environment such as a calving pen inside a dairy facility during a temperate climate winter? They are not out in freezing rain, wind or snow, but will warming them help with survival and productive growth? Is it beneficial for animal welfare and also practical?

I still remember the use of a heat lamp in a straw bedded small pen or box in the barn or the “calf castle” calf building which often had such poor ventilation that it was virtually a pneumonia inducement chamber. These were used by very well meaning producers, great to deal with as friends and clients. If anyone would have suggested to “mom”, the boss lady of the farm, anything that she thought would harm a calf they would be in trouble. However, the ventilation was often poor in those facilities. There was some danger of fire also.

Over the last 35 years or so, something that I still consider to be a great advance in calf raising became more widespread, the adoption of calf hutches. As herds and farms have become larger, more facilities including the calving areas have become more open to the outside to improve ventilation. The concept of warming up a newborn - or a preweaned calf of any age that is sick - has become less common and probably less practical on many dairy farms.

This subject was addressed in a November 24, 2015 article from Michigan State University Extension by F. Cullens, “Warming rooms for newborn dairy calves”. It can be accessed at:

http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/warming_rooms_for_newborn_dairy_calves

Cullens writes, “Newborn dairy calves are born with only 2-4 percent body fat, which will not sustain them long if a wet calf is exposed to sub-freezing temperatures. To protect against frost during extreme cold temperatures, newborn calves must be dried off as soon as possible. The ears most commonly experience frostbite; however, the nose and feet are easily affected as well.

Producers are finding health advantages to placing newborn calves in a warm environment where they can be quickly dried and cared for during their first few hours. Commercial warming boxes are available where a single calf can be housed and many variations of homemade boxes or rooms can get the job done on larger farms.”

The article goes on to emphasize the importance of ventilation, as mentioned above, and ease of cleaning, including the value of floor drains. One good point: “Two rooms may be necessary so that one location can be totally cleaned out and dried while the other is in use. Without proper management and sanitation, warming rooms and boxes will quickly become a contaminated environment and present a significant disease risk to calves.”



A warming room with individual stalls, easy to clean rubber mats and a radiant heater on a timer.



A group housing warming room with straw bedding. (Figures from MSU Extension, 11/12/15, F. Cullens)

I was intrigued by the group housing warming room, wondering about how long calves might stay in there and about transmission of infectious diseases between calves. This was addressed in the article also:

Length of time calves will stay in the room

“Farms vary widely on how long newborn calves are left in a warming room. The minimum length of time to leave a calf in the room or box is until the calf is completely dry (a few hours), and at maximum a few days. Depending on the set up, either situation can work well. If calves are group housed in the warming room, then they should be moved out shortly after they are dry to avoid cross-contamination.”

Heat source

“Heat lamps can be used to warm calves, but carry a fire risk and do not move air around. Space heaters can be considered if the space is small. Radiant heaters with a fan work well and dry calves quickly. Ideally, set the radiant heater on a timer or thermostat to avoid over-heating calves.” writes Cullen. To me it seems preferable that if at all possible, radiant heaters on a thermostat would be used. I would not want to build a facility like this and use heat lamps or space heaters. However, there was no cost information in the article and I suppose that thermostat controlled radiant heaters are quite a bit more expensive. I looked for pricing on this combination. I found several thermostats for controlling livestock housing priced between \$40 and \$90. The price range for radiant overhead heaters for livestock was between approximately \$200 and \$1000, with most between \$400 and \$650.

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Tasks in the warming room

A final bit of advice from the article: "For worker convenience, consider what tasks will be done in the warming room. Shelving or hooks to store equipment for ear tagging or feeding colostrum may come in handy." This is always a good thing to consider when building any facility, certainly including one for livestock handling. For a group warming room, or the area near individual warming boxes, calf handling and treatment supplies should have a storage area, ideally including a refrigerator or refrigerator/freezer. A convenient way to keep records should be included also. Some producers are now entering all animal treatment records through smart phones into a software program, but a paper log or white board can often be the handiest way for anyone who needs to know to consult treatment records on individual animals or to evaluate trends over time. I encounter situations where computer access is temporarily impossible and/or phones have been misplaced or their batteries run down. Some form of readily seen written records are always a good idea.

If any of our readers have experiences with, specific dimensions or building plans for, or other ideas to share regarding calf warming boxes or rooms, please let me know.

Please let us know your comments and also suggestions for future topics. I can be reached at (435) 760-3731 (Cell), (435) 797-1899 M-Tues, (435) 797-7120 W-F or David.Wilson@usu.edu.



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