

# Preventing pneumonia in beef animals

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As we approach the time of the big autumn weanling sales, as a vet, my mind returns to the annual issues we see with pneumonia.

I was recently reminded of the impact while examining some lungs in an abattoir to assess the impact of an outbreak of pneumonia the previous year.

Most of the animals examined had evidence of damage to their lungs.

Even though, in most cases, the damage was not severe, there is no doubt that it would have affected thrive in these animals.

There are several studies looking at the impact of chronic lung damage on per-

formance of beef animals.

Minimising pneumonia, both clinical and sub-clinical, will probably be one of the biggest factors in increasing a beef farm's profitability.

Risk factors that need to be addressed now include stress at weaning and sale, parasite burden, particularly lungworm, and poor ventilation in sheds.

Inadequate ventilation in cattle sheds is, in my experience, a major issue.

We need a good inlet and outlet to facilitate the removal of bugs from the environment.

I have seen modifications to sheds result in major decreases in the incidence and severity of disease.

Some sheds built in recent years have not worked well in this respect, with the typical

ventilated sheeting being difficult to manage.

Putting a plan in place now to reduce the incidence and severity of disease will pay in the long term.

Changes in management on farm and in transport, along with a vaccination plan, are key considerations.

There are now several vaccination options available to control bacterial and viral pneumonia.

### Best management

Even with the best management practices in place, some cases of pneumonia are almost inevitable in bought-in weanlings.

Early detection is vital. Feeding meal will allow you to identify suspects when they are

slower to come for their feed.

Prompt treatment will reduce the impact on the animal.

Talk to your own vet on the best options for you and your animals.

Any control plan for pneumonia should also include parasite control and an assessment of management and housing factors to attempt to reduce stress on these susceptible animals.

Donal Lynch owns and runs Donal Lynch Veterinary, Tullamore, Co Offaly. Donal Lynch Veterinary is part of XLVets. XLVets is a group of progressive practices who are working together to achieve a better future for agriculture and veterinary in Ireland. Visit [www.xlvets.ie](http://www.xlvets.ie).