

# Time for spring-calving herds to start preparing

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**N**ow is the time when those of us with spring-calving cows need to start preparing for a start date around 1 February.

On one farm where we had issues with calf scour last year we are putting a plan in place to prevent it this year.

There are two main areas we are looking at – basically preventative treatments and management, even though both are intrinsically linked. We have considered nutrition

and minerals and have decided to bolus and also feed 2kg of a pre-calver nut for the six weeks pre-calving.

The pre-calving nut is important to ensure adequate intake of both energy protein to ensure calf health and quality colostrum.

Cows tend to reduce feed intake as they get near calving. We have just dosed all cows for fluke and worms after a positive dung sample, tails and backs were clipped too, and we used a scour vaccine. Scour vaccines work by increasing the scour prevention antibodies in the colostrum.

There will be a big effort over the next few months to keep cows and housing as clean as possible. This will be critical to reduce the number of bugs that calves will take in before they get any colostrum.

Our calving and colostrum management plan is in place. This will ensure the calf gets adequate good-quality colostrum as soon as possible after calving. Any farmer who has had an issue with calf scour is well aware of the importance of planning early to prevent the issue recurring next year. With cryptosporidium being the most commonly diagnosed

cause, prevention is better than cure as treatment is difficult and can be unrewarding. If you had a problem last year, talk to your vet now and draw up a plan to cover all the angles contributing to the problem which will lead to an easier calving period.

Donal Lynch is practice owner of Donal Lynch Vets in Tullamore, Co Offaly, which 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)