



Word from the Herd

Louisa Veterinary Service

Fall 2023

GRANT NEWS



We are pleased to announce that our Dr. Katie (Lukowicz) is a **VMLRP** recipient, starting in 2024. The **Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Plan** awards a total of \$75,000 over a three-year period to pay toward veterinary school debt. This award is based upon the graduate's commitment to serve in some of the most hard-to-reach rural communities...communities with a widespread large animal population and limited access to veterinary care. The counties in need of additional food animal veterinarians are determined by the State Veterinarian. They then nominate these counties to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. The process is rigorous and the competition is stiff. Dr. Katie's love of community and dedication to food animal care and disease prevention made her a great candidate. **Congratulations, Dr. Katie!**

LVS also has news on the grant front. The USDA offers a **Rural Practice Enhancement** grant to encourage food animal veterinarians to service under-served areas. The counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Louisa, and Nelson were determined by the State Veterinarian to be underserved areas. LVS was fortunate enough to apply for and receive this grant to service these four counties. The money we receive from this grant will help us update equipment and branch into new technology. We plan to work closely with the extension agents in the four counties to help educate our producers and community. We are also looking for input from you on your ideas how we can better serve and educate you and your community. Please feel free to call the office, or e-mail us with your suggestions.

Here are a few simple ways you can help Dr. Katie and LVS serve you better:

- Be patient and clear in your communication with the office and Dr. Katie, she is in her first year of practice and it's helpful for her to get good directions to your farm and a brief description of what the problem is with the animal before she arrives.
- Help educate our staff about your particular type and/or breed of animal. In some purebred animals there are unique health issues that are helpful to be made aware of, don't hesitate to share those with us. An example would be that Miniature Silky Fainting Goats are very, very sensitive to sedation.
- Reach out if you have an idea for a meeting or if there is a particular skill you'd like us to work with you on while we're at the farm. If we know ahead of time we can schedule in extra time at the visit. Also, if there's a skill you'd like to see in video form on our website so that you can access it, just let us know.
- Understand that just because we are production animal vets doesn't mean that we both can perform every skill or every surgery on every type of production animal. Each doctor comes with a unique skill set, and we are working to make Katie's more comprehensive every day. There may be a time you need a cow artificially bred on a weekend that Dr. Melinda is away and you may have to seek different help or wait until next time. You may have a rabbit question when Dr. Katie is away and Dr. Melinda knows precious little about rabbits, just to give you a few examples.

How to Prevent Calf Scours



I know it seems pretty early to be discussing calf scours since most of the fall calves are just starting to be born, but if you really want to **stay ahead** of calf scours you need to start **now**. Here are a few tips for ensuring your calves have healthy immune systems to maximize their health and growth.

- Ensure proper colostrum intake. This is the single most important thing you can do for a calf to help its immune system develop properly. This can be difficult with calves being dam raised in a pasture. If you are ever uncertain if a calf has nursed colostrum in the first 24 hours of life, don't hesitate to offer it colostrum **replacer** (with at least 50 grams of protein) in a bottle. If a calf is particularly weak, it will need to be given by a feeding tube. If the calf takes the bottle readily or has to be tubed, offer it a second dose 6-8 hours later.

Reasons to suspect a cow might not have sufficient colostrum:

*Her udder didn't develop due to illness (tick fever, low calcium or magnesium) or fescue toxicosis (Note: Some heifers are VERY slow to fill their udders!)

*She has HUGE teats that the calf can't nurse. Get her up and milk her out to see if you can get the calf to latch and be SURE to cull her before the next calving season.

*The cow is not staying with the calf much. Sometimes cow's get mixed up about who is really their baby and this confusion happens early on. The wrong calf may be getting her colostrum.

- Give calves a selenium supplement at birth. We usually suggest injecting calves with Multi-Min or BoSe. Both of these products are prescription so you must purchase them from a veterinarian. Even if your cows receive a high level of selenium in their mineral, this supplementation is advisable!
- To the best of your ability keep loafing areas and areas around hay feeders and waterers dry. Use gravel to facilitate drainage where possible. Bacteria and viruses thrive in moist environments.

- Try to detect a scouring calf early. It doesn't mean you have to treat right away, but you need to take **extra time** to ensure the calf is nursing its mother and has adequate energy levels. If a calf is doing these things it means it is not yet dehydrated and the calf may be able to fight off the scours on its own. If the calf is not nursing and keeping up you need to catch the calf and check its temperature and hydration status. If the calf is over 103 and has a dry nose or skin tent it will likely require antibiotics and electrolyte supplementation. If the calf is flat out it needs to be brought in out of the field and you'll need to call the vet for IV fluids. See the short video below on how to administer SQ fluids. This is an easy skill to learn and can provide temporary hydration to a struggling calf.

Treating Anemia in Small Ruminants



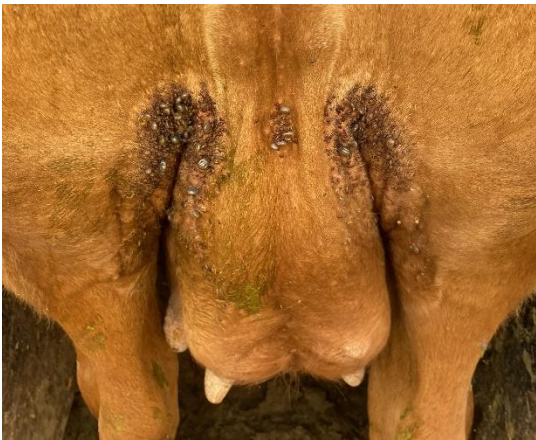
Anemia is a **deficiency of Red Blood Cells (RBCs)**. Anemia, left untreated, can be life threatening.

Anemia has a variety of causes in sheep and goats. The **most common** cause of anemia is **parasitism**. Certain plants eaten by the sheep or goats can destroy RBCs. Elderly small ruminants may have suppressed RBC production due to certain types of cancer. The anemia becomes apparent when the parasites are feeding off the RBCs faster than the animal can replace them.

Treatment will be based on cause and severity. Whatever the treatment, the sheep or goat will still be anemic until its body replaces those depleted RBCs. On average, it takes a healthy animal **30-60 days** to replace lost RBCs, however it can take longer. The animal remains at risk for opportunistic diseases during this time so it is important that they have easy access to hay, clean water and shelter. Keep their **stress LOW** and keep them cool or warm depending on the season. You can further assist them in their recovery by giving Vitamin B Complex under the skin along with red cell (an iron supplement) orally **OR** 5cc of Geritol (oral vitamin b and iron) by mouth daily for five days. Geritol can be ordered on Amazon. Ultimately, it is up to their body to heal but these measures can put healing into a higher gear. Severe cases of anemia can require a blood transfusion, which takes time and is expensive.

Each animal's recovery time will vary so it is important to check mucous membrane (eyelid) color in order to monitor this aspect of your flock or herd's overall health. FAMACHA scoring is a great guideline for more accurately measuring anemia. It is a great way to take the guesswork out of monitoring and treating anemia. To learn more about FAMACHA scoring and become certified, visit <https://web.uri.edu/sheepngoat/famacha/>

Theileria Update: What's Up with the Stillborn Calves?



Here lately I keep getting the question, “Is the tick disease causing me to have still born calves?”

I believe the short answer is NO. Here in Central Virginia, we are considered endemic for Theileriosis since 70% of our cull cows are testing positive. This simply means, we've been through the worst of it and the cows that suffered ill effects from it did so in the recent past.

The Asian longhorn ticks are spreading south and east at the moment and as of 2021 Theileria has been identified in 17 states. The only cattle in our region that might struggle would be cattle purchased from a naïve state and brought here.

It is not uncommon in our early fall calving cows and heifers to see some still born calves, especially in a very hot and dry year. The summer of 2023 definitely qualifies as hot and dry! The cattle that suffer the most from heat stress are heifers carrying large calves and cows carrying twins. In my experience in this region, once you start having a string of live calves this pattern usually continues throughout the calving season. It makes sense that the first several cows to calve are the most affected by heat stress since they are in their last few weeks of their pregnancies in the hottest part of the summer.

There certainly are other causes of late term fetal loss including: Low selenium, Leptosporosis (most cattle are vaccinated for this), and Neospora (the protozoal parasite carried by coyotes and dogs). If you feel you have experienced more than a 5-10% fetal loss in your calf crop this year it may benefit you to have a veterinarian out to take blood from the cows that lost calves before selling them.



Hello, Doctor?

We wanted to take this opportunity to review the best way to schedule an appointment, or to contact us if you have an emergency. Now that we have two doctors on staff, contacting one of them directly may not yield the results you hoped for.

The best way to schedule an appointment for **routine** care is to **call the office** at 540-967-2974 during our normal business hours of Monday through Friday between 8:00AM and 4:00PM. E-mail for routine care can work if you have flexibility in your schedule and do not need an immediate appointment, but be aware that e-mail is not monitored after hours or on the weekend.

If you have a **sick** animal or an **emergency** during normal hours, **calling the office** is still the best way to get seen. The office staff knows where the doctors are and what other appointments or emergencies are scheduled and are trained to triage a call to help get it properly scheduled. **Do NOT e-mail for an emergency or sick visit.**

After hours, it is still best to call the office number if you have an emergency. We have an answering service with real people answering the phone and they will contact the on-call doctor to relay your message. The on-call doctor can then call you back to discuss your problem. If you try to contact a doctor directly, you may find they do not answer or are out of town because they are not on-call. **Again, do NOT e-mail for an emergency or sick visit.**