

## **Treating Scouring Calves with Banamine**

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A USDA report indicated that by the fifth week of life, greater than 25% of dairy calves had been treated for diarrhea, also known as scours. In this report, dairy producers thought scours caused more than 50% of the calf deaths in heifer calves being raised as replacement animals.

Many different approaches have been suggested for the treatment of calves with diarrhea. The treatments most often include antibiotics by various routes of administration along with supportive fluids given orally or intravenously. A recent report suggests that under certain circumstances the use of Banamine (flunixin meglumine) may reduce the number of days of sickness. This drug is used in most instances to reduce fever and inflammation.

Holstein bull calves were used in the study that was carried out on a commercial California calf ranch. During the study, 115 calves 1–21 days of age were enrolled in the study. At the first sign of diarrhea, one third of the calves received no banamine; one third got a single dose of Banamine (1 mg/lb body weight); and one third got 2 doses 24 hours apart. The banamine was given intramuscularly. Assignment to treatment groups was made on a random basis. Calves were evaluated daily for rectal temperature, fecal consistency, attitude and skin elasticity through their first 21 days on the calf ranch. The days of sickness were also recorded.

Results of the study showed that calves that had blood in their scours benefited from a single dose of Banamine given at the first sign of diarrhea. Calves treated in this manner had fewer sick days and received fewer antibiotic treatments compared to the non-treated or twice-treated calves with blood in their feces. Calves without blood in their scours did not benefit from Banamine treatment. All calves with diarrhea were also treated by the ranch personnel using various antibiotics. No attempt was made to determine the infectious cause of the diarrhea.

Calf diarrhea continues to be a major cause of sickness and death in milk-fed dairy calves. This report suggests that treatment with Banamine along with other therapies under the conditions of this study may be expected to reduce the impact of diarrhea. As with other treatment strategies, it is always a good idea to consult with your dairy veterinarian before you begin a new treatment regime.

(Barnett SC, Sisco WM, Moore DA, et al. 2003 Evaluation of flunixin meglumine as an adjunct treatment for diarrhea in dairy calves. JAVMA 223; 1329-33)