

## The Cost of Calf Scour

Farmers with suckler beef herds know only too well that scour (enteritis) can be a serious problem in young calves. It is not only a painful condition for calves, it can also create a lot of hard work and stress for the farmers along with a serious dent in their bank balance.



Twenty veterinary practices in the Scottish Highlands recorded any scour outbreaks that they attended.

### For each outbreak the vets recorded:

- the proportion of calves affected,
- mortality,
- weight loss in those that survived,
- the likely impact on the sale value of surviving weaned calves,
- all drugs used & treatments administered and their associated costs.

Scour outbreaks serious enough to call the vet occurred on 207 farms. The average cost of an outbreak was £2239, with farm labour (costed at £3.50/hour) to support and treat sick calves making up 70% of this cost. Drug costs averaged £250/outbreak. Even more revealing, as can be seen from the figure to the right, was the wide range of costs experienced by individual farms. On over 10% of farms the cost was more than £100/calf at risk (that is on average across susceptible calves at the time of the outbreak).

No particular reasons could be found for this, for example, high costs were not confined to a particular farm type or region. This suggests that a serious outbreak of Scour can strike any suckler unit. Furthermore the resulting extra costs can be so severe that they could cause considerable hardship and perhaps even threaten farm business viability. It is thus prudent for all farmers with suckler cows to draw up a scour prevention and management plan in consultation with their veterinary practitioner. Remember that health planning is supported by the Animal Health and Welfare Programme within the Land Management Contract Scheme funded by SEERAD.

Prepared by A. W Stott, Animal Health Economics Team.

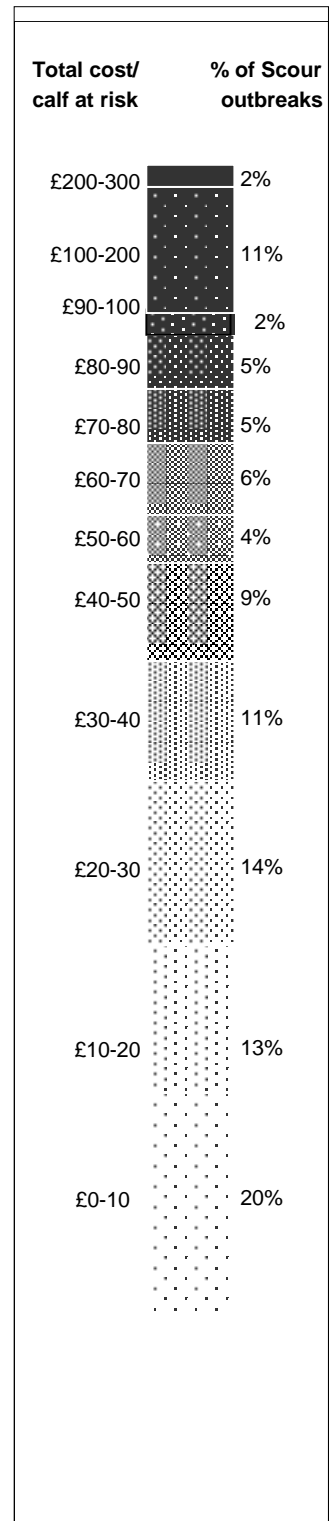
### Contact point :

Lindsay Eaglesham, Development Officer, SAC

T: 0131 535 3130

E: [Lindsay.Eaglesham@sac.co.uk](mailto:Lindsay.Eaglesham@sac.co.uk)

W: [www.sac.ac.uk](http://www.sac.ac.uk)



05/06/0044