

GUT PARASITES AT GRAZING

By Jade Mowlem

The weather has finally taken a positive turn and there are some cattle out to grass! With this comes the risk of gut parasites.

Identifying risk

The most susceptible group are weaned calves grazing for the first time, followed by youngstock in their second grazing season, specifically those on pastures that have grazed cattle in the previous 12 months. Worms in the larval stage accumulate on the pasture over the grazing season and peak in mid-summer onwards. There are many different ways we can monitor pasture burden. For example:

- Liveweight gain – should be 0.7–0.8kg/day at grass
- Parasites can reduce growth rates up to 30%
- Worm egg counts
- Pasture mapping

Low risk pastures include new leys, silage aftermaths and fields that have only grazed sheep in the last 12 months. A “leader follower” system can help to reduce risk of worms; first season grazers can be grazed ahead of older cattle if there is still sufficient grass available.

Treat appropriately

Anthelmintic treatments (wormers) should be targeted at appropriate times. Anthelmintic treatment of first season grazing calves at housing can minimise risk of disease at the end of winter.

Avoiding resistance

Resistance has been detected in the most common gut worms in the UK, therefore it is important that the correct wormer is used and that cattle are not treated unnecessarily.

Use wormers correctly:

- Follow label instructions
- Weigh cattle where possible (or dose to heaviest weight in a similarly sized group)
- Avoid under-dosing
- Calibrate dosing guns

Developing immunity

As animals get older, they acquire immunity. This is likely to have developed following the 2nd season grazing as cattle need at least eight months on pasture to get enough exposure. Calves that are over-protected by excessive anthelmintic treatment are at risk of slow immunity development.

Control

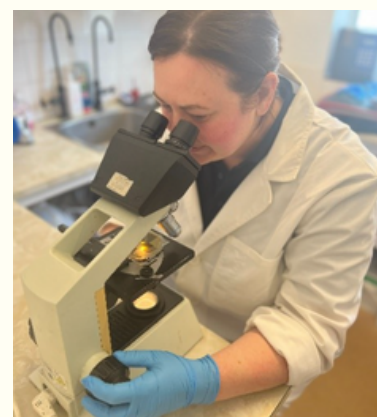
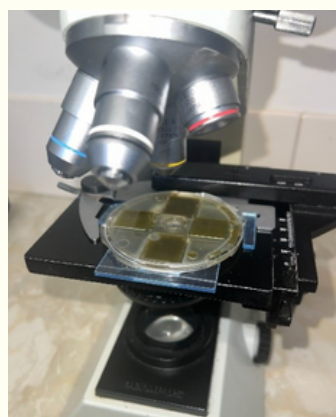
Aims:

- Prevent clinical disease – loss of appetite, scouring and poor condition
- Prevent sub-clinical losses (reduced growth rates)
- Develop immunity

What have we always done?

Early season strategic treatment

- This approach involves treating calves 3 weeks after turnout regardless of burden. This kills worms before they reach maturity and prevents large numbers of eggs contaminating the pasture.
- As the worms do not reach maturity, the immunity the calves gain is limited
- High likelihood of resistance development
- Common practice has previously been to then worm 8 and 13 weeks after turnout as well, however, overwintered larvae die off by early June so treatment is unlikely to be needed after the end of June. A treatment at housing may be needed.
- Cattle need to stay on the pasture after worming, which seems backwards but is intended to avoid the development of resistant worms. This is unlikely to be feasible for long periods of time.



What should we be doing?

Targeted treatments

- Monitoring infection in first and second season grazers can be achieved using faecal egg counts and/or regularly weighing.
- Slows the development of resistance
- Faecal samples should be taken from 10–15 animals in their first or second grazing season so a pooled worm egg count (WEC) can be performed. This should be repeated every 3 weeks throughout the grazing season. This can indicate if cattle are on contaminated pasture, direct the type of treatment and determine exposure and therefore likelihood of immunity development.

- Animals not meeting target weights or with an egg count of >200 egg per gram are likely to benefit from treatment.
- If treatment is administered, it is beneficial to run a second WEC post-treatment to determine efficacy of the chosen wormer (7-14 days after, depending on class of wormer).
- This approach limits pasture contamination, maintains some susceptible larvae and provides challenge to stimulate immunity.

You can drop faecal samples into the practice for a WEC or why not join in on our cattle worm egg count course on Tuesday 21st May to learn to do it yourself! 10am-1pm at our Sturminster branch. To sign up please call the farm office on 01258472314.



NEW BUILD UPDATE

We are very excited to see the inside of our building coming together! Follow our socials for regular video updates.



STAFF NEWS

Our Marketing assistant Georgia leaves us this month for pastures new. Georgia has done a great job of running our social media, website and newsletters. We wish her all the best for her next adventure.



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

A new consultation has opened on future wildlife control and Bovine Tuberculosis.

Follow the link to record your views:

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/bovine-tb/bovine-tb-consultation-wildlife-cattle/>



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO LAMENESS MANAGEMENT

Thursday 9th May @ FMLH Closworth branch, Hamish's Farm Shop, BA22 9RF. 6:30pm for arrival and drinks with 7pm start, followed by food. To discuss the diseases causing lameness and how we manage them on farm. With guest speaker James Wilson.



MILKSURE

Wednesday 15th May @ 11am. Location TBC. Milksure is a dairy industry wide initiative to promote responsible use of medicines in dairy cows. The course focusses on how medicines are used on dairy farms and how increasing awareness of medicines usage can reduce antibiotic usage and decrease the risk of bulk tank failures.



SHEEP MEETING

Wednesday 15th May @ 4pm. Location: Mere Down Farm, BA12 6AT. "How to build a robust parasite plan in your commercial sheep flock in 2024" Join us for a farm walk at Mere Down Farm, by kind permission of Richard Coward. Come and discuss how we can get the best out of a flock by reducing parasite challenge, improving animal resilience, monitoring parasite burdens, and treating effectively. Wear clean boots. We will finish the meeting with a fish and chip supper on farm.



CATTLE PRACTICAL WORM EGG COUNT

Tuesday 21st May, 10am-1pm @ Friars Moor Sturminster Branch. An introduction into worm egg counting – worm identification, kit used and a chance to have a go. Will also include practical advice on pasture rotation, product usage and preventing wormer resistance. £100 inc VAT (25% discount for youngstock group members). To include the price of 2 quality control checks when you are doing this on your farm.

To book on our courses please contact the farm office on 01258472314 or use our sign up forms on our website! Go to www.friarsmoorlivestockhealth.co.uk/events/



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