

# Sheep & Beef Talk

March 2018



## Managing Worms in Cattle

With weaning on the horizon now is a good time to recap worm management in cattle. There's a fair bit to think about in this article. We encourage you to come in and talk to the team at VetEnt to help put together a cattle worm management programme for your farm.

The aim of managing worms in cattle should be to limit worm larval intake during the first 12-18 months of life. These young cattle are the most vulnerable to worm infection and are the main source of pasture contamination with worm eggs.

### Reducing larval intake

Avoiding grazing areas of the farm where there the most larvae are. These include:

- Paddocks grazed by cattle under 1 year old in the previous autumn and winter. Young cattle produce the most worm eggs so any pasture grazed by them will be contaminated
- Around dung pats. Larvae don't move too far from the pat and cattle don't like eating around the pat unless they are grazing to low levels so avoid hard grazing
- Low pasture covers. Forces cattle to graze around dung pats and increases the number of larvae eaten per bite
  - Create safer feed through cropping

### Reduce the number of larvae on pasture

- Drench young cattle strategically to reduce egg

output during their first autumn

- Delay weaning for as long as possible by feeding cows well to prolong lactation
- Use sheep to clean up larvae around dung pats
- Larvae die off over time, so leave pasture ungrazed by young cattle for as long as possible. Avoid grazing weaners in autumn where they will spend the winter. It may take over 6 months to get to low levels of larval contamination

### Have a well-planned drench programme for young cattle up to 12 months old

- If the drench is effective there should be little difference between oral, injectable or pour-on application, except that oral drenches do not have persistent activity. The choice may be determined by your facilities
- Make sure the combination drench contains levamisole (clear drench) if drenching cattle under 12 months old to kill Cooperia worms
- For killing inhibited (burrowed into the gut lining) stages of Ostertagia prior to the early spring period in R1 and R2 cattle you need a combination drench that contains a "mectin" (ML).

### Help the animal cope with worms

- Avoid hard grazing of young cattle to maintain immunity and weight gain
- Have a plan in place for other animal health issues such as trace element deficiencies, BVD, yersiniosis, facial eczema and liver fluke

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## Manage drench resistance

- ❑ Quarantine drench any new cattle with a triple combination and keep off pasture for 24 hours. Have some supplementary feed and water available. They should then graze pasture either contaminated with cattle eggs and larvae, or a sheep paddock where ewes can clean up any eggs and larvae from worms that survive the quarantine drench
- ❑ Do a drench check to make sure your drench is effective. 10 days after drenching, hold a mob of calves in the corner of the paddock for a few minutes, let them drift away and collect 10 fresh samples off the ground for egg counting
- ❑ Avoid single active drenches. Use a triple combination as your first choice. Modelling has shown that if there is no resistance present on a farm when drenches are first used, combinations are very effective at slowing resistance down as shown in the table below.

Drench	Time to resistance
Single active	10 years
Double combination	100 years
Triple combination	1000 years

By now most farms will have some level of resistance so these numbers are only to provide an indication of the value of combinations compared to single actives

- ❑ Try to plan for refugia.
- ❑ Set the dose of drench based on the heaviest animal in the mob.
- ❑ Be careful with young/small cattle when using drenches containing abamectin or levamisole as they can be toxic at high doses. Some drenches have a minimum weight and age before they can be used
- ❑ Check your drench gun is delivering the correct dose with a calibrated measuring cylinder

Do you have some questions about worm management and how you can build in some of the things covered in this article into your farming system? Come in and talk to the team at VetEnt to fine tune how you manage worms in cattle.

## Beware of the Rain

While the good dollop of rain from Gita is providing relief from the drought it also provides the ideal environment for many animal health issues.

### Worms

Worm larvae in a dung pat or pellets cannot develop without moisture and develop faster when it is warm. Under ideal conditions Barbers Pole worm can develop from an egg to the infective L3 in just 4 days! Larvae survival on pasture is also improved with moist conditions. Expect high levels of larval challenge especially if pasture covers are low.

A higher larval challenge increases the need for drenching.

- Ensure drench intervals for lambs stay at 28-30 days. A few days extra of high egg output means the larval challenge only gets bigger
- If you are not doing a drench test this year, collect 10 dung samples 10 days after drenching for egg counting to check if your drench is working or not.

- Use FEC's in ewes to help decide if drenching is needed or not.
- The more we test, the more farms we are finding where moxidectin and triple combination drenches are struggling to kill all worms. Managing worms using tools other than drench such as grazing management, cropping and stock policy is becoming more important.

### Fly strike

Summer rain increases the risk of fly strike for two reasons:

- Rainfall increases fly survival so fly pressure will be higher. More flies means a bigger challenge is placed on application technique and dip chemicals to prevent strike.
- Rainfall washes dip chemicals out of the fleece, especially when we get 100mls or more at a time. Expect shorter protection periods from your dip. During the very wet 2017 autumn we had reports of a range of different products only lasting 3-4 weeks before sheep were getting struck.

### Footrot

Wet and fresh pasture = wet feet = increased risk for footrot. Sheep with dry, healthy skin between the toes do not get footrot but once the skin is wet there is a risk of footrot developing. The risk is further increased with temperatures remaining over 10 degrees celsius during late summer and higher stocking rates with weaned ewes and lambs on rotations. Keep a close eye on mobs and consider any planned foot inspections sooner.

## March Reminders

- ❑ Order Toxovax for ewes and hoggets if not already done
- ❑ Plan pre-tup animal health treatments to avoid yarding ewes close to tupping
- ❑ Book in cattle pregnancy scanning for 6-8 weeks after the bulls come out