



### Notice!

We are planning for a new practice management system in the next few months. You will notice the format of the invoices will change and some of the procedures will be called by a different name. If you have any queries please contact the office, Michael Fallon or Mark Crawshaw.

### Coccy Troubleshooting in Cattle and Sheep Rebecca McCloy

This month: common questions and misconceptions about intestinal parasite coccidiosis – coccy to its acquaintances. Spread from dung to mouth, it requires special disinfectants (eg Bi-OO-Cyst).

#### **The scour is bloody, it must be coccy? OR The scour isn't bloody, it can't be coccy?**

Although the classic image of a lamb or calf with coccidiosis shows dark or bloody scour, they don't all read the textbooks. Worth nailing down a diagnosis before wasting time and money treating something which isn't there.



#### **This lamb/ calf is too old/young to have coccy?**

Most commonly seen in animals 3-8 weeks old, but can be seen in older animals if they did not develop immunity early on. All in/all out systems help here.

#### **I've dosed them with Baycox/Vecoxan and they are still scouring – is there a stronger drug?**

This is usually one of 2 reasons: 1) Coccy was not the cause. 2) Coccy was the cause, but the guts have already been damaged. Gut healing takes time – supportive care and fluids can be a big help.

Annoyingly, the best time to treat coccy is just before the scour starts –can be hard to predict. Look for patterns year on year.

#### **Can I use medicated feed or a Decoxx bucket?**

These have their place, but lambs and calves do need to meet some level of coccy in order to develop their own immune defences (this is why we don't commonly see coccy in older animals). Feeding decoxx can stop immunity developing.

#### **I don't have a problem with coccy, the lambs and calves are not scoured.**

Actually, scour is not the only sign of coccy. Poor growth rates or loss of bloom can also be seen. If youngstock are not performing as well as you would like, it is worth speaking to us to find out why. Just to complicate matters, there are several families of coccy, some which cause disease and some which are harmless, so we often need a follow-up test to determine which we are dealing with. It is quite normal to find coccy eggs in healthy animals - the vets will help you interpret lab results.

### Preventing Grass Staggers This Spring Alex Lyon

Cases of Grass Staggers or hypomagnesaemia can occur rapidly and be fatal. Grazing lactating cattle on lush spring grass with high potassium levels is one of the biggest risk factors for the disease. Cattle become uncoordinated, "stagger", and will often be found down unable to get up. This will rapidly progress to death if untreated. Treatment of individual cases is by injecting magnesium supplement under the skin and if done early enough will lead to a speedy recovery.

The key to prevention is supplementation of magnesium in the diet as cattle are unable to store sufficient reserves. There are several options for doing this:

- Providing supplementary forage such as hay or straw, this extra roughage slows down gut transit time to allow more Magnesium to be absorbed.
- Magnesium bolus can be given for slow release of Magnesium into the rumen.
- Increasing the magnesium content of concentrate feeds and mineral mixes.
- High magnesium mineral lick buckets.
- Magnesium flakes added to water sources.
- Reduced use of high potassium fertilisers.
- Spraying magnesium directly onto grass.

Are your cows at risk? Talk to us about testing and prevention measures for your farm.

## Pre Breeding Bull Checklist Natasha McCappin

Whilst we are busy calving you'll be ready to put your bulls out with the cows again before you know it, bull decisions can have big consequences on the numbers of calves born, calving spread and ultimately calf survival for the following year so it's worth taking time to ensure you have suitable fit bulls for your herd.

**So how many bulls will you need?** Bull:cow ratio will vary depending on the age of the bull, libido and body condition, a rough guide is shown in table 1, this assumes your bulls are in fit body condition >3, sound and fertile. Whilst some will run higher bull:cow numbers and 'get away with it' this can result in:

1. Lower conception rates from overwork = greater calving spread, increased neonatal calf disease & increased barren cow culls.
2. Increased risk of consequences of infertility, i.e. if 1 bull running with 30 cows becomes infertile during the season less damage is done to herd than where 1 bull is running with 50 cows

Age of Bull	No. of Cows
12-15 mt (strongly recommend pre-breeding exam for this age group)	10 females
15-18 mt	12 – 18 females
18-24 mt	18 – 25 females
24 mt. & older	25 – 35 females

**How do you know if your bulls are fertile?** Unfortunately, often a bull infertility problem is not detected until after the fact, or in the best cases, during the latter stages of the breeding season and so a full pre-breeding soundness exam is recommended for all bulls whether new or old to avoid disaster. It is a good idea to check newly purchased bulls as soon as possible post purchase so if any problems decent sellers will refund/offer a replacement, once resident for weeks proving the bull was infertile on purchase becomes difficult.

**Where has your bull been?** Equal to the disaster of running an infertile bull, is bringing diseases into your herd via a bull, thankfully many bull sales require pre-sale bloods from bulls for common diseases such as IBR, Johnes and BVD. Second hand or hire bulls however pose much higher risk, and worse as they have mated with cows before your herd they can carry *Campylobacter*, a highly infectious sexually transmitted disease that causes cow infertility and can cripple a breeding herd, if you intend to use a 'pre-loved' bull speak to the vets about pre-breeding tests to ensure he's safe before entering the herd.

### What is an Estimated Breeding Value (EBV)?

Many traits in cattle breeding can't be fully assessed by eye. The animal you see and the data on its performance is influenced not just by genetics, but by its upbringing, feeding, management and health status; none of these will be passed onto its progeny, only the genetic traits. An EBV is the best estimate of an animal's genetic ability to pass characteristics onto its offspring, and they exist for both maternal (e.g. milking ability and calving ease) and terminal traits (e.g. growth rate and carcass). Beside each EBV result you will also see a figure called accuracy, as an EBV is a prediction based on known records the accuracy varies ie if accuracy 50% there is a 50% chance the prediction is correct, the higher the EBV accuracy the greater chance the offspring will match the EBV prediction.

Once we have a selection of fit fertile bulls in front of us EBV's help us choose bulls that are genetically compatible with our herd's breeding objectives – e.g. if breeding replacement heifers you will want to give stronger weighting to maternal traits e.g. maternal/daughter calving ease than for a bull intended to breed fattening stock where direct calving ease is more important, it is a good idea to discuss with the vets which traits will be of most benefit to your herd before going to the sales, some traits aren't exactly what they say on the tin e.g. scrotal size – does not just relate to male progeny but is also a fertility indicator for female progeny, **where positive females will reach puberty younger**, this may be good for replacements but bad for breeding fattening stock where accidental matings can occur!



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