



## Lungworm in Cattle

In the past lungworm (also known as hoose or husk) was a disease of calves but nowadays we often see outbreaks in adult cattle. The disease is caused by the worm *Dictyocaulus viviparus*. Adult worms live in the animal's lungs where they produce first stage larvae which move up the windpipe, are swallowed and pass out in the faeces. These then mature on the pasture to stage three larvae, which if they are eaten mature to adults in the lungs. Climatic conditions usually result in disease being commonly (but not exclusively) seen during August and September. All cattle are at risk of lungworm until they have been exposed to lungworms and have developed immunity. It is essential that cattle keep this immunity but it can be lost if they do not receive exposure to lungworm infection each year.

### Causes of Disease

**In practice outbreaks of lungworm are often unpredictable.** There are two main situations that can lead to an outbreak.

1. High lungworm challenge caused by:

- The introduction of infection into a naïve herd (cattle have not been exposed to lungworm recently)
- Naïve animals joining an infected herd
- Inadequate anthelmintic control when at pasture
- Increasing the stocking rate of the farm
- Warm, wet weather

2. Inadequate immunity to lungworm caused by:

- Failure to vaccinate (Bovilis Huskvac)
- Prolonged dry weather leading to reduced larval dispersion
- Excessive anthelmintic usage which eliminates infection completely so no immunity is stimulated. Over use of anthelmintics in 2<sup>nd</sup> grazing season replacement heifers is often implicated.



### Clinical Signs

A dry cough is often the first sign then an increased rate and depth of breathing in cattle at grass. In cows the only signs may be a drop in milk yield, weight loss and occasional coughing. On rare occasions lungworm can be seen in housed cattle.

### Diagnosis

Diagnosis requires veterinary examination. Laboratory testing of faeces for larvae is useful in youngstock but not in adults which may have disease without larvae in the faeces. Accurate and fast diagnosis is important in order to provide effective treatment of affected animals.

### Treatment

This is with anthelmintics, however, cure is not always immediate. Cattle can take several weeks to recover and stop coughing after successful treatment. Furthermore, some individuals become significantly worse a few days after treatment as they react excessively to the dead worms – these animals need urgent veterinary attention. On rare occasions cattle can develop severe respiratory distress and, if not treated rapidly, die approximately 3-weeks after apparently successful initial treatment.

### Prevention

Every farm should have a control programme in place which not only prevents disease but allows a low level of lungworm infection to develop to stimulate immunity. Vaccination and / or strategic anthelmintic treatment are used to prevent / control lungworm disease.

**MBM Veterinary Group can supply sound advice and competitively priced anthelmintics and vaccines for lung worm treatment and prevention.**

## Sheep Breeding – Tighten Up Your Lambing

Teaser tups offer a cost-effective and simple way to tighten and advance the lambing period. Candidates should be fit, healthy and fertile – selecting a young, virile tup/tup lamb will give best results and last for many years if well managed.

Tups are vasectomised during a small surgical procedure - on farm or at the surgery - to remove the spermatic cord. This leaves the testicles and male hormones intact, but removes their ability to breed. Tups should be vasectomised a minimum of 6 weeks prior to use, to ensure no sperm remain.

For the maximum “Ram effect”, ewes should be completely isolated (from sight, smell and sound) of all males for several weeks before teasers are introduced. Teasers should be used at a ratio of 1 to 100 ewes, and be replaced by breeding tups after no more than 2 weeks. If managed correctly, a peak in lambing will occur over 2-3 weeks.



## FlockCheck – Dead Lambs/Barren Ewes?

Now lambing has finished, it's a good time to review flock performance, before getting ready for tugging time again! With a kind Spring, hopefully you have lots of strong lambs. However, now is a good time to look for answers if you had a few barren ewes this year. Barren or abortion rates higher than 2% suggest an infectious cause, with Toxoplasmosis and Enzootic abortion the most common causes. Until 31<sup>st</sup> July, MSD is subsidising blood testing of 6-8 aborted, unvaccinated ewes to check for such diseases. Sampling can be done on farm or at the practice, and results will help target future disease control measures, including vaccination if appropriate.

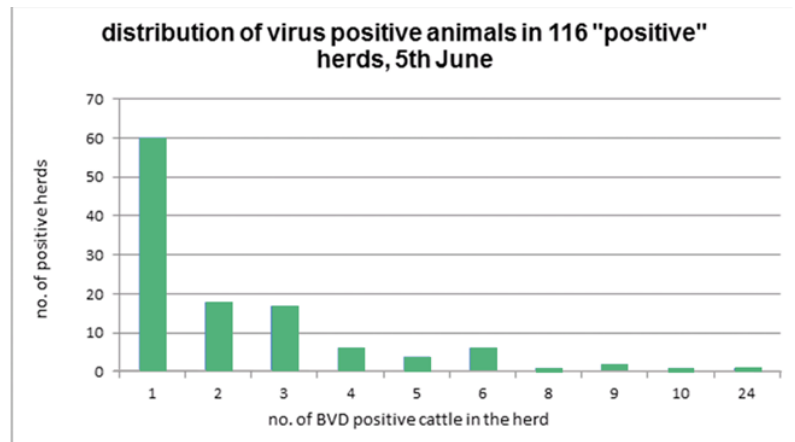
## BVD Eradication Scheme

The Scottish BVD Eradication scheme is still ongoing. Progress is being made but there are still a number of “Not Negative” herds and PI animals on farms.

As can be seen from the graph there were still 116 Scottish herds with one or more PI animals on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June. This highlights the need to maintain good biosecurity, a sensible vaccination policy and vigilance if signs of BVD are seen in the herd.

These signs include;

- Abortion
- Poor fertility
- Weak poor doing calves
- Increased calf mortality
- Increased calf scours and pneumonia



Graph 1: Number of Holdings with one or more PI animals

The vast majority of people are testing for BVD either by doing a check test once a year for beef herds or twice a year for dairy herds, or by tissue tagging all calves born on the holding. It is very important to remember that when a check test is carried out there is the potential for your status to change from “negative” to “not negative” if any of the calves come back antibody positive. This can be a problem if you move any animals around the time of your check test. For example, if a beef herd carries out its check test and fails it, then any animals sold in between testing and the result will need to be tested. This can result in the herds buying these animals losing their status and claiming the seller for the testing of these animals.

**MBM Vets therefore recommend no animals are sold from the day of the blood test being taken until the day the results come back.**

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