MBM Veterinary Group

# APRIL 2021 NEWSLETTER

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## Worming First Season Grazing Calves

Mark Crawshaw

***(this article does not cover fluke or lice)***

There are two objectives. Firstly to prevent growth set back or disease in the calves and secondly to reduce the rate that the worms develop resistance to wormers by over use or incorrect use of wormers. It takes around 8-months in total of grazing contaminated pasture for solid immunity to gut worms to develop (this may take place over two grazing seasons).

**Use wormers correctly.** Follow label instructions, weigh cattle if possible and avoid under-dosing. Check dosing equipment regularly to ensure the precise dose is delivered. Always store anthelmintics according to the manufacturers' recommendations. Anthelmintic resistance has been detected in intestinal worms in the UK. This must be treated as an early warning. It is essential that anthelmintics are used responsibly. There are many risk factors for anthelmintic resistance. The best way of limiting selection pressure on worm populations is to avoid treating cattle unnecessarily and to ensure the correct drug and dose is used.

**Suckled Beef Calves at Foot with Their Dams *(e.g. Spring Born Suckled Calves)***

The cows are immune to gut worms and by grazing reduce the build-up of worm eggs on the grass as any worm larvae they eat do not progress to egg laying adults. This will protect the calves from a high challenge and disease whilst allowing them to establish their own immunity. This is the way nature intended. So usually these calves only need worming towards the end of the grazing season (August/September) if they show signs of lungworm and/or at housing to clear any gut worm infection for the winter housing period. Using a single dose of a persistent macrocyclic lactone (ML) wormer around a month pre-housing may cover both eventualities.

**Artificially reared calves (e.g. dairy replacements) OR Autumn born beef calves.**

These do not have the protection of their dams in the same way as spring born suckled calves so a prevention strategy is required otherwise they will develop parasitic gastroenteritis. There are essentially three methods.

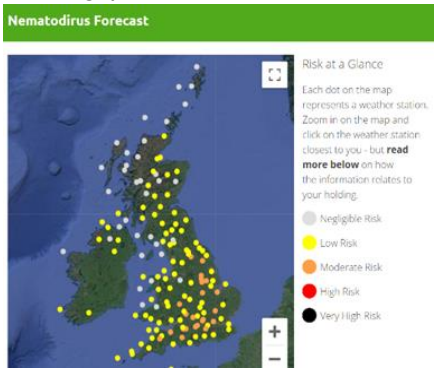
1. **Clean grazing strategy** - Turnout onto low risk pastures not grazed by cattle last year. The safest pastures are newly planted leys following a cereal or root crop. Monitor the worm situation by testing faeces for worm eggs monthly from June and only treat if necessary.
2. **Suppression strategy (*most commonly used)* -** If using pasture grazed by youngstock last year, implement a control plan to protect against gut worms. Strategic dosing can be used starting at or within three weeks of turnout to suppress worm egg production by the calves and prevent the peak in challenge that would occur around July without any treatments. Examples of this approach are to administer a long acting injection or bolus formulation at turnout, or a ML that has a shorter persistence of three to six weeks, at turnout, and then again after an interval of six to eight weeks. Occasionally a third treatment after a similar interval is required for a long grazing season. This assumes the cattle graze the same pasture, if they are moved a risk assessment of the new pasture will be required.
3. **Avoidance strategy (dose and move) -** Fields not grazed early in the season and used for hay or silage production can be available for grazing from July/August onwards. As there has been no cycling of infection and over-wintered larval populations decline exponentially, the risk of cattle acquiring heavy worm burdens while grazing such paddocks is lessened. Therefore, calves can be left untreated in the 1st part of the grazing season and then are dosed and moved to these aftermaths in early July. This avoids them grazing their original pasture during the peak worm challenge that will occur in July. <u>The dosing should take place several days or more before or after they are moved</u> so any eggs from resistant worms surviving the treatment are diluted by eggs from susceptible worms already on the pasture, thus slowing the development of anthelmintic resistance. <u>Do not dose and move on the same day.</u>

Whatever strategy is used the **calves need to be observed closely for coughing or condition loss** which might indicate lung worm infection and diagnosis and treatment implemented. They should also be wormed at housing. **Always consider vaccination of calves against**

**For detailed guidance see:** https://www.cattleparasites.org.uk/app/uploads/2020/01/roundworm-140120.pdf

## No Joke Rebecca McCloy

Q. What is small and white and torments sheep farmers in spring?
A. Killer worm nematodirus - can cause dead lambs without any warning, as well as severe scour and loss of condition. Nematodirus only affects young lambs (strong immunity develops with age).




Once the weather gets milder, farmers, vets and worms will all shed their protective coats. Any lambs eating a fair amount of grass at this time will be at risk from newly-hatched larvae on pasture. Thankfully we have a 'Nematodirus forecast' available on the SCOPS website to help us time our defences to coincide with the hatch:
https://www.scops.org.uk/forecasts/nematodirus-forecast/

When the local forecast moves to **MODERATE** or **HIGH**, the 2 main ways to avoid problems are:

1. **Strategic grazing** – avoid putting at-risk 2021 lambs on pasture grazed by 2020 lambs
2. **Strategic white wormer** (eg Endospec) – when the forecast moves to '**HIGH**' and you have no option to move the lambs

Now is the perfect time to use a white wormer as there are not widespread drug-resistance problems with nematodirus. This means we can save our clear and yellow wormers for later in the season to treat the rest of the gutworm families (where white-wormer resistance is common). As with all wormers, Endospec will only be effective if the right dose per bodyweight is given.

***Don't***

- Be lulled into a false sense of security once lambs have been wormed – there is no future protection/residual activity
- Ignore dead lambs – a post-mortem exam can check for nematodirus along with other potential problems and help prevent further losses

**Looking for a summer lamb wormer with short meat withhold..? Read this**
Later in the grazing season, the approach to worm control is totally different: dung samples taken regularly will let you know if worms are a problem before lambs start losing condition and scouring. This lets you use wormers tactically and can help avoid the issue of lambs stuck in a withdrawal period when they approach finishing. We can perform this test at the practice for £16 to get you a fast answer and potentially save you a job if the lambs don't need wormed. Please speak to one of the vets for details on the best way to handle samples – as poor sampling practice gives poor results.

## BVD Vaccination Michael Fallon


Spring seems to have sprung again and I am sure you are all dreaming about getting livestock out to grass and no more winter feeding! It is also the time of year to think about vaccinating and protecting your stock from disease threats such as BVD and Lepto that can drastically reduce productivity and profitability, and increase losses should they enter the farm. If you don't have BVD or Lepto on your farm don't let them back in!

BVD is most likely to enter via a bought in animal(s), with in calf cows or heifers being particularly risky. This is because there is no way to test the unborn calf inside the dam. The dam can be BVD negative but carrying a Persistently Infected (PI) Trojan calf. If you are buying in the least risky source is either cattle health scheme animals or BVD tissue tagged animals. In calf animals should not be purchased. The next riskiest source of infection is neighbouring stock, with a potential PI coming into contact with your herd. If a PI animal comes into contact with breeding animals in the first 3 months of their pregnancy then a PI animal could be born in your herd. If you are tissue tagging this will hopefully be picked up fairly shortly after birth. However if you are blood sampling annually or bi-annually it could be a while before this animal is picked up. Signs to look out for if a PI calf is born is an increase in calf scour, calf pneumonia and calf mortality rates all of which can be early warning signs a PI animal has been born. Nose to nose contact is needed for BVD transmission to occur so maintaining fence boundaries and preventing straying will reduce risk from neighbouring stock.


In both scenarios (bought in PI and contact with neighbouring PI) vaccinated animals are the best defence to prevent BVD becoming established in your herd. Please call MBM Vets on 01563 522701 to order BVD (Bovela) or Lepto (Leptavoid) vaccine or discuss their control further.