



WELCOME TO
**farm
2016 news**



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Cattle Worms: Treatment

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This is the third in a series of three newsletter articles about cattle worms. First we considered how to risk assess a farm for worms, then we looked at diagnostic tests and how they can help us to control worms, and this month we're thinking about treatment.

Whom should I worm, and when?

It's now usually considered inappropriate and unnecessary to regularly blanket treat all stock throughout the grazing season. Instead, wormers can be used for grazing young stock as follows:

- Strategically, at the beginning of the grazing season until mid-July, to prevent high levels of infection and disease on permanent pasture.
- Therapeutically, for groups known to be at high risk. For example, untreated first-season dairy calves grazing a September permanent pasture with a short sward that was grazed by calves the previous year will be at high risk. Similarly, late-born beef calves that haven't had much first season grazing will often benefit from a mid-season treatment in their second grazing season, since their immunity will be lower than that of their earlier-born counterparts.
- Therapeutically, where monitoring (e.g. 3-weekly daily liveweight gains or faecal egg counts) has shown a need for treatment.

When worming therapeutically, we often say that it's a good idea to leave the heaviest 10% of a group untreated, to 'dilute' any resistant worms and minimise development of resistance to wormers. The recent idea of 'Targeted Selective Treatment' (TST) takes things a step further and targets wormers only at those individual animals which will benefit most from treatment. It involves regularly weighing all

young stock in a group and just treating the animals which aren't meeting their Daily Live Weight Gain (DLWG) targets. Trials have shown that TST can result in good worm control while reducing the number of worming treatments by over 90% - good for minimising resistance and good for your pocket!

- Therapeutically, for sick animals. Ideally, however, the situation wouldn't get this far!

Housing treatments for worms are commonplace, and housing is the one time of year when it's a good idea to treat the whole group. Housing treatments remove existing worm burdens, freeing cattle of the worms' negative impact for the winter, and they ensure that when cattle go out to pasture the following spring, they will not immediately contaminate pasture with worm eggs. Housing treatments also prevent Type II Ostertagiosis. This is caused by the sudden, simultaneous development (usually in late winter) of inhibited larvae ingested at the end of the preceding grazing season. It tends to only affect a few animals in a group, but can cause severe illness and even death.

Routine worming of adult cattle is controversial, and usually unnecessary. It's probably worth worming adult beef cattle once a year at housing, partly to prevent them contaminating pasture the following spring. If adult dairy cows are wormed at all, just do them once a year at calving (this maximises any milk production benefit, which will be from the treatment to the end of that lactation). **Continued...**

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Hot summer nights...

As the summer marches on, don't forget that temperatures above 25°C can cause heat stress in cattle, which can manifest as reduced feed intakes, lower milk yields, reduced fertility and increased risk of mastitis, as well as the more obvious and severe signs of lethargy, panting and even collapse and death.

Cows are even less able to cope with high environmental temperatures if the humidity is high. When it's warm, good ventilation is vital. Fans and water sprinklers can cool cattle effectively, but often very simple alterations to buildings, such as opening up side inlets and ridge outlets, can improve ventilation dramatically. A plentiful nearby water supply is a must (sounds obvious, but is often overlooked!). Adjusting feeding patterns can help, too - cows tend to eat little and often during warm days, but more at night when it cools down. They may sort feed and eat less forage than usual, since forage produces large amounts of heat during rumination. Feeding higher energy feeds in warm weather can compensate for intake reductions, but do be careful of acidosis.

Don't miss out - order your abortion vaccines early

Abortion continues to be a major worry during the lambing season, but there are vaccines available for two of the most common causes - enzootic abortion (*Chlamydia abortus*) and toxoplasmosis (*Toxoplasma gondii*). For both CEVAC Chlamydia and Toxovax, ewe lambs intended for breeding may be vaccinated from 5 months of age, and shearlings and older ewes should be vaccinated during the 4 month period prior to mating (but at least three weeks before mating starts). Please contact the surgery with any questions, or for more information on prices.

Resistance will be less of an issue in all-year-round calving herds, as only a few cattle will be treated at any one time. Do bear in mind, though, that adults that have been housed for a year or more, or that have never been out, will have little or no immunity if they are suddenly turned out onto contaminated pasture. In this situation, they'll need to be treated in the same way as naive young stock.

Why should I worm?

If worming is worth doing, it's worth doing well! General principles for dosing include the following:

- Store wormers in accordance with the instructions, usually away from direct sunlight, avoiding extremes of temperature and in a fridge if appropriate.
- Always read the label to check that the product is suitable for the livestock you want to treat, and note any precautions for its use.
- Only use a product before its expiry date.
- Make sure the dosing equipment is compatible with the product that you are using, and check it is clean and measuring the correct volume.
- Administer the product according to the manufacturer's instructions, paying particular attention to injection or bolusing techniques.
- If available, use scales or a weigh band to ensure an accurate liveweight is known for each animal in the group.
- Dose according to liveweight, as detailed in the manufacturer's instructions.
- Record all wormers administered (batch number, amount and expiry date), animal identity, treatment dates and withdrawal periods accurately.
- Ensure withdrawal periods are adhered to. Be aware that they do not relate to the length of activity of a product (this will be shown elsewhere on the label).
- Do not mix different wormers together or with other products, as this can inactivate active ingredients.

Guidelines taken from COWS (Control Of Worms Sustainably): Administering wormers effectively.

It's important to get worming right. Under-dosing can lead to reduced persistency and duration of protection, increased risks of resistance, and poor efficacy when treating

clinical cases. Over-dosing, on the other hand, can lead to a risk of toxicity and longer withdrawal periods for meat and milk.

What should I use?

Most of the wormers available are broad spectrum and will treat most worms likely to be present in your cattle, but always read the label to see exactly what the product acts against and how long it will remain active for. If you have any concerns about resistance, or think that a product's not working properly, or even just want to check that it is, you can perform a faecal egg count (FEC) reduction test, which involves doing FECs before and after worming to measure the wormer's effectiveness. The protocol for this is quite specific, so do speak to one of the vets first.

At housing, part of the reason for giving treatments is to prevent Type II Ostertagiosis, caused by reactivation of inhibited larvae. This means that housing products must be effective against inhibited larvae. Again, the label should make this clear, but generally macrocyclic lactones (the 'clear' drenches) are very effective, while benzimidazoles (the 'white' drenches) are less so.

It is common practice to use more than one product or a combination product at housing, since this is also a good time to treat for lungworm, liver fluke, lice and mange. If there's no fluke, there's no point in using a combination product that treats roundworms and fluke, but almost every animal that does have fluke also has Ostertagia, the stomach worm, so treating both will probably be useful if fluke is present on your farm. Don't forget, though, that a lot of liver fluke treatments can't be used on milking dairy cows.



Above: Worming adult beef cows once a year at housing will prevent them from contaminating pasture after turnout the following spring.

Below: Housing treatments remove existing worm burdens and prevent Type II Ostertagiosis.

Pictures courtesy of XLVets

