

Vaccinate Against Lungworm Pre-Turnout – Or Cough Up Later



If you heard your cattle coughing at grass last autumn, this means they could have been harbouring lungworm burdens that compromise growth rates and lifetime milking performance. Most lungworm cases are reported at the back end of the grazing season.

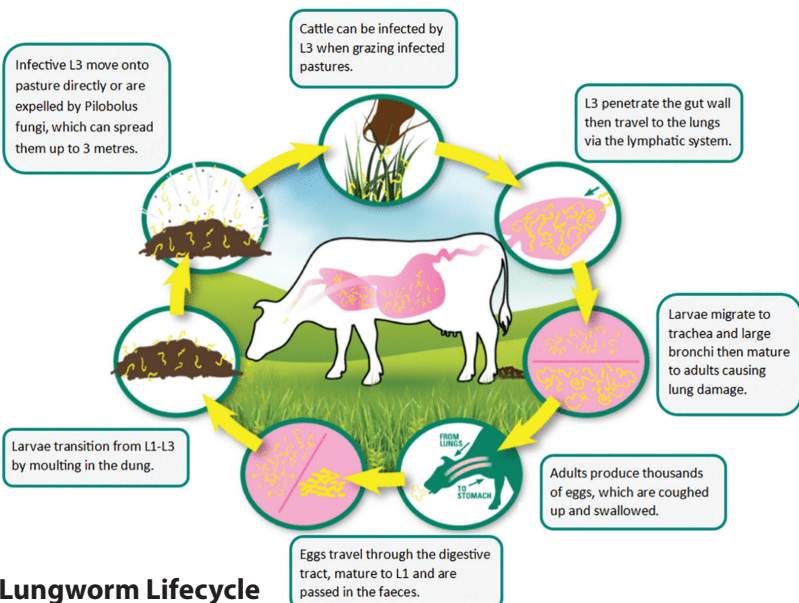
Lungworm larvae can overwinter on pasture and in carrier cattle to pass infection year to year, which means cattle can pick up infection as soon as they are turned out in the spring. And if they do, it could be very costly.

In the dairy herd, lungworm infection could easily cost you £140 per cow with lost milk production averaging 4kg per cow per day – and that's a conservative estimate – because you can also lose cattle to lungworm. It isn't just dairy cattle that get affected either. In severe lungworm outbreaks, growing cattle losses can average at £50-£100 per head. For beef suckler herds, calves are generally exposed to a continuous low-level challenge from adult cattle, who will be immunologically competent. However, if the herd immunity declines, there is an increased risk of disease.

Bovilis® Huskvac is a live vaccine, made from irradiated lungworm larvae, which are incapable of causing disease. Vaccination should be completed at least two weeks before the herd is turned out to grass. Wormers should not be given until two weeks after the final dose of vaccine. As heifers are often wormed with long-acting products through their first and sometimes second grazing seasons, they lack the immunity that comes from exposure to the lungworm. This makes them very susceptible to infection.

The vaccine allows a small number of lungworm to complete their lifecycle, meaning there is a continued development of natural immunity throughout the grazing season. Over-reliance on wormers does not allow this natural boosting to occur.

Please contact the practice to plan your lungworm control strategies for this season and to order Bovilis® Huskvac.



Lungworm Lifecycle

D. viviparus, the cattle lungworm, has a direct lifecycle meaning no other species are required for the complete cycle, which is shown in this diagram. This differs to parasites such as liver fluke that require a snail to complete their lifecycle.

Schmallenberg in Lambs

Many of you will remember the Schmallenberg outbreaks a few years ago, and the recurrence in 2016. The disease is thought to occur in 3-5 year cycles, and APHA undertake surveillance to monitor for recurrence of the infection. As a result, APHA are offering free testing on brain samples from lambs and blood from ewes, from cases where lambs have deformities suggestive of Schmallenberg infection. If you have any deformed lambs (usually with abnormal limbs and joints) give one of the vets a ring to decide if it would be worth investigating Schmallenberg.

Pre-lambing Metabolic Profiles

We have a limited number of kits for pre-lambing nutritional profiles which have been sponsored by Norbrook. There will still be a charge to come and take the samples, but all lab fees are covered by Norbrook. These are best carried out 3-4 weeks pre-lambing to assess protein and energy intake in the run up to lambing – allowing enough time to make changes which could have a real impact on lamb survival and colostrum yields. These kits will be offered on a first come-first served basis.

If you are interested, please ring Matt via either office (01477 571000 / 01663 732564) or on 07816 440306.

TB Testing

We have a lot of herd due annual / 6 month TB tests in the near future, complicated by the long weekend at Easter (2nd-5th April). Please can we ask anyone needing whole herd tests in the next couple of months - to ring and book as soon as possible. We already have a number of tests booked in right through April and into May.

So if possible, please call the office (01477 571000) and book to avoid missing your preferred dates.



How Are Your Cow Tracks?



The roads and tracks on your farm can have a huge influence on your lameness incidence, particularly white line disease. It might sound silly, but a good starting point when addressing problems is to 'think like a cow!'

The best way to encourage cows to walk faster is to give them a flat, wide and even surface to walk on, so that they need to spend less

time looking at where to place their feet. As you walk along your own tracks, imagine your feet are bare. (Yes, cows' feet are a lot harder than ours, but they weigh a heck of a lot more! The pressure caused by standing on a stone can be considerable, and force the stone up into the foot.) Are there lots of stones that you need to avoid? How quickly would you want to walk?

The order that the cows walk to the parlour in is dictated by pecking order in the herd. If the cows are pushed along (particularly with quad bikes or dogs), the cows at the back are most at risk of white line disease. Recently, experts have begun to question the traditional view of the slow lame cows trundling along at the back of the herd, and offer this food for thought: Are the cows at the back because they're lame, or are they lame because they're at the back?!

Lameness can have a big financial impact, as it can also affect fertility and production. A comprehensive approach combining: effective track design and cow flow, regular locomotion scoring, skilled foot trimming, and picking up lameness early on, is the best way to reduce the lameness incidence on your farm.

For lots of useful information on the ideal design for farm tracks, take a look at the AHDB Dairy publication 'Cow Tracks.' Download from <https://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/cow-tracks>

Our own qualified foot trimmer Bryan Robertson can assist you with routine trims and lame animals, either on a regular or ad hoc basis, and also with on-farm staff training once Covid restrictions allow. He has a WOPA hydraulic crush so you don't need to provide any equipment. For any help with lameness in your herd speak to one of the farm team on 01477 571000. **To book Bryan for foot trimming, call the office or phone him directly on 07506 139047.**



Avian Influenza Prevention Zone continues



The APHA Avian Influenza housing order still remains

in place, meaning there is a legal requirement to house all poultry. In specific circumstances, birds can be confined to a small area, and contained using a net to prevent access to or contact with wild birds. It is worth reading the requirements on the website below to ensure you are following the rules, as there can be a hefty fine and even a prison sentence for failing to take appropriate steps. There are some great ideas online (such as the one shared on our Facebook page recently) on how you can enrich your bird's environment with perches, areas for scratching and even earth for them to root around in. Our vets are always happy to give advice on how you can make your birds as comfortable as possible and how to keep them healthy during this prolonged period of housing.

Unfortunately, we don't have an end date for these restrictions yet. They will be lifted by APHA when the risk of infection or spread from wild birds is reduced. Cases have been falling, with three outbreaks confirmed in January and a single one in February. We will keep you all up to date as and when we hear any news. Information about the measures and the housing requirements can be found on the APHA website (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu>).

Do you keep chickens, ducks, geese...?

Help protect your birds from the risk of #birdflu

Did you know?

There is a constant risk of bird flu in the UK from wild birds. As it's highly contagious take action to protect your birds from catching it.



Remember



Any very sick birds, or unexplained deaths, must be assessed by your vet. By law suspicion of bird flu is notifiable and can affect poultry movement and trade.

Tip 1: Cleaning

Clean footwear before and after visiting your birds. Keep areas clean and tidy, and regularly disinfect hard surfaces. Humanely control rats and mice.



Tip 2: Feeding



Place your birds' food and water in fully enclosed areas that are protected from wild birds, and remove any spilled feed regularly.

Tip 3: Fencing

Keep your birds separate from wildlife and wild waterfowl by putting suitable fencing around the outdoor areas they access.



Tip 4: Register

www.gov.uk/guidance/poultry-registration

Register your birds online and get alerts on any outbreaks of bird flu

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