

Newsletter August 2021

Lungworm in Cattle

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***Dictyocaulus viviparus* also known as Parasitic Bronchitis, Husk or Hoose, is associated with high mortality. Calves at grass from midsummer to autumn are most vulnerable to the disease, but heavy infections in animals of any age who have not previously been exposed, will produce clinical signs. It is most often seen in dairy calves, but also common in weaned beef calves.**

The overall costs associated with an outbreak have been (conservatively) estimated at approximately £140 per adult cow in the herd, with milk production losses, averaging 4 kg/cow/day. Subclinical infections have been shown to account for a milk drop in the region of 0.5 kg/cow/day.

A fascinating contribution to parasite epidemiology is delivered by *Pilobolus* fungi. While parasite development is completed in the cow pat, the fungus grows on top of it. When the spore box of the fungus discharges, the infective lungworm larvae are expelled up to 10 feet away from the faecal pat, thereby increasing the chance of ingestion by grazing cattle.

The **clinical signs** may vary from occasional coughing to severe respiratory distress, and symptoms reflect the number of infected larvae ingested during a relatively short period. Typically, the peak incidence of clinical cases occurs in late summer and early autumn (August-October) though can persist until December. By the third week, severely affected cattle do little else except stand in a characteristic head-extended position with rapid shallow breathing and frequent coughing. Clinical disease in adult dairy cows can result in severe losses, mainly in terms of reduced milk production, reduced fertility and potentially even the death of the cow.

Spring-born suckled cows that are with their dams until housing are often less at risk. However, first-season grazing dairy cows and autumn-born suckled beef calves can be susceptible when turned out in early summer. Lack of exposure in young cattle may result in clinical disease in older cattle.

Widespread coughing in a herd is a tell-tale sign, and mortality can occur in heavy infestations. Other symptoms include weight loss and laboured breathing. Fever may occur when there is secondary bacterial infection.

Currently, we do not have evidence that diagnosed disease outbreaks, normally recorded June/July onwards and peaking in September, are starting to occur earlier in the year. However, when compared to other regions, longer grazing seasons lead to more outbreaks later in the year (especially October) in the south-west of England. If non-immune animals are turned out on heavily infected pasture, for example, a plot already grazed by first- or second-season heifers in that year, then clinical disease can occur three to four weeks after turnout. However, this is uncommon. Typically, in spring, very few larvae will have survived the winter, leading to only a light pasture contamination when animals are first turned out. Carrier animals are thought to be the most important and reliable contributors to the year-to-year survival of *D. viviparus*. If naive animals are turned out onto pasture grazed by carrier animals, contamination will normally be light until the arrested larvae resume their development and create patent infections. If pastures are not rotated, repeat infections on the same pasture can lead to heavy pasture contamination, with disease being seen in the second or third worm generation (approximately two or three months at pasture, respectively). Transmission between cows is most problematic if animals of different immunity levels are mixed, for example, when brought-in animals enter the herd or heifers join the adult cows.

Methods that can be used to prevent lungworm outbreaks are:

- Low stocking rates
- Closed herd policy or quarantine and treatment of introduced stock
- Do not run young calves with older calves
- Avoid lush wet pastures or paddocks with swampy areas if possible, at times of high risk
- Use rotational grazing if possible, moving at weekly intervals, followed by adult immune cattle
- Blood samples can be analysed for antibody to *D. viviparus* and faecal larvae counts can be used to assess exposure from early summer through the grazing season – however, a negative faecal result is not proof of absence of disease, especially in adult cattle with mild symptoms larvae are rarely found, but they do respond to anthelmintic therapy
- Vaccination may be required on farms where the disease is endemic. Vaccinated animals need to be exposed to parasitic challenge following immunisation to ensure the development of adequate immunity.



A vaccine is available to protect against lungworm in cattle, or alternatively control can be achieved through use of an appropriate endectocide or anthelmintic treatment programme.

If the pre-housing anthelmintic treatment can be given some weeks before housing, this will help ensure calves are free of lungworm and therefore healthier, and less at risk of Bovine Respiratory Disease in the early housing period. Some endectocides allow treatment up to five weeks pre-housing which, for convenience, could coincide with vaccination against the respiratory viruses. As always, it is important to speak to your vet about the treatment methods most appropriate for your herd.

Important Information

As of the 1st of July 2021, default 6-monthly TB surveillance testing will be introduced throughout the high-risk area (HRA). Somerset, Devon and Dorset are included in the HRA, meaning this change impacts most of the clients of FarmVets SouthWest.

You will be able to complete your first routine whole herd test (WHT) scheduled in the period between July 2021 and June 2022 as normal. Once this WHT has been completed with negative results, APHA will schedule your next test for six months later, unless the herd qualifies for **earned recognition**.

Earned recognition will allow you to remain on annual surveillance testing. You will be eligible to remain on annual surveillance testing if your herd meets either of the following criteria:

- The herd has been in existence for at least six years and has not had a TB breakdown in that six-year period (including breakdowns where no lesion and/or culture positive animals were disclosed). A single break from keeping cattle of less than four months during the six-year period is permitted.
- The herd is registered to a bovine TB health scheme licensed by the Cattle Health Certification Standards (CHECS) and accredited at level 1 or above. This is a scheme any farm can sign up to, and to gain level 1 or above you must have not had a TB breakdown for over one year. The scheme has a number of rules that must be adhered to and will not be suitable for every farm. If you are interested in joining the CHECS TB scheme, please contact the office and ask to speak to a vet.

If either of these apply to your herd and you believe you already have earned recognition, then the APHA will contact you to inform you that you are eligible to remain on annual surveillance testing; you do not need to take any further action. If you have earned recognition but would like to be included in the six-monthly testing regime then you must contact the APHA and arrange to do so.

Welcome Zoe!

Zoe joins us as an ATT (approved Tb tester) and will also offer veterinary technician (Vet-Tech) services. Zoe has gained a wealth of experience farming 400 dairy cows near Honiton and previously managed dairy farms in Gloucestershire and Wales. As an approved Tb tester, although not a vet, she will be certified to carry out Tb tests on your farms. When not testing she will have a vet-tech role. This will include mobility, teat and body condition scoring, vaccinating, monitoring calf growth rates and disease as well as disbudding and blood sampling. This will complement the vet's role on farm. Hopefully in the future we will also be able to offer freeze-branding.



Honiton Show 2021

We're looking forward to the return of Honiton show on the 5th and 6th of August. This year the show is being held over 2 days to control crowds. The kid's art competition also returns, with the theme being "Thank you to our farming key workers". Drop entries into any office or even bring them with you on the day. It will be great to see you all again, we'll be near the cattle ring as usual (**Avenue B, 135**).



IMPORTANT NOTICE

We are still getting a few clients using our old bank details to pay off their account, please use the bank details below:

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Foot Trimming Course

We are now taking bookings for the Foot Trimming course that we have on **18th and 26th August**. If you are interested, please contact the office on **01278 663399**.

