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Livestock NEWS

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ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY

Staff News

Welcome

We are pleased to welcome Charles Sandbach to the team. Charles is originally from Bolton and qualified 2 years ago from RVC London. Before joining us he worked at a farm practice in sounth Wales and has a keen interest in youngstock management.
Outside of work he enjoys hiking & climbing.

Haemonchus in Sheep and Goats – An Emerging Threat in Cumbria

By Ben Dustan

For many years, the barber's pole worm (*Haemonchus contortus*) was considered a parasite of warmer regions of the UK. However, changing weather patterns, increased animal movements and milder winters mean that Haemonchus is becoming an increasingly important parasite of sheep and goats in Cumbria.
Haemonchus is a blood-feeding stomach worm that lives in the abomasum. Unlike many other gut worms, it can cause severe disease and sudden death before obvious diarrhoea develops. In fact, affected animals often have no scour at all.

Clinical Signs

The parasite feeds directly on blood, leading to anaemia and protein loss. Clinical signs may include:

- Pale gums and eyelids (suggesting anaemia)
- Bottle jaw (fluid swelling beneath the jaw)
- Weakness and lethargy
- Rapid weight loss
- Poor growth rates in lambs and kids
- Reduced milk production
- Sudden death in severe cases

Goats are particularly susceptible because they generally develop less immunity to worms than sheep.
Disease is most commonly seen during warm, wet conditions from late spring through autumn, although infected animals can carry worms through the winter.

Diagnosis

Early diagnosis is critical as animals can deteriorate rapidly.

Routine faecal worm egg counts can detect Haemonchus eggs, although these are difficult to distinguish from other strongyle worm eggs without specialist laboratory techniques. We are fortunate here at Paragon to be able to offer Haemonchus speciation on worm egg count samples sent to us, but using AI technology, enabling us to get a Haemonchus result to you within hours without the need to send the sample away to a vet lab to perform larval cultures to identify the parasite more accurately.

Packed cell volume (PCV) testing can help assess the degree of anaemia. In some cases, the FAMACHA© system, which scores eyelid colour, can be used to identify animals requiring treatment. A new farmer-orientated online training course is now available for this monitoring system – please check out https://www.shortcourses.ed.ac.uk/course/famacha

Post-mortem examination may reveal large numbers of the distinctive red-and-white striped worms in the abomasum.

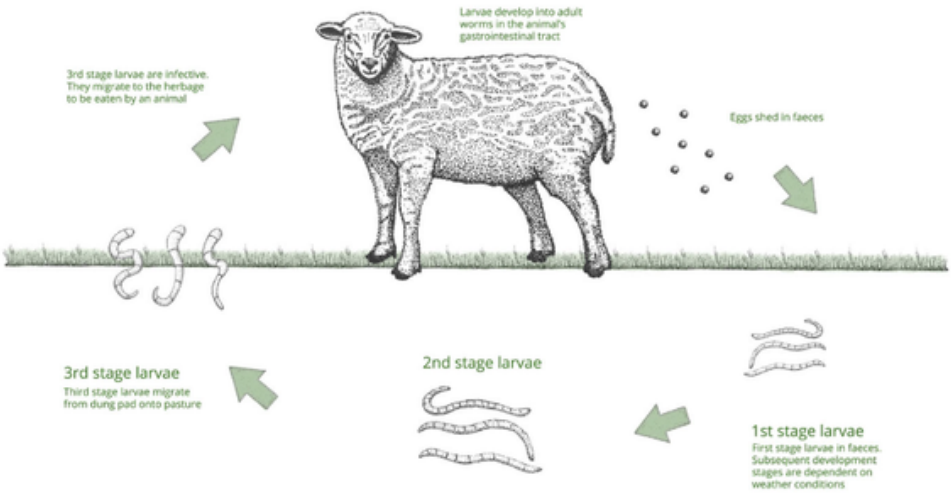
Treatment

Prompt treatment is essential where clinical disease is suspected.

Several wormer groups remain effective against Haemonchus, but resistance is a growing concern. You should seek veterinary advice regarding the most appropriate product for your farm. Correct dosing is vital, particularly in goats, which often require higher dose rates than sheep for some wormers.

Where resistance is suspected, faecal egg count reduction testing can help determine which products remain effective.

Severely affected animals may require supportive treatment, including blood transfusions, fluid therapy or nutritional support.



Grazing Management

Good grazing management is an important part of control.

Avoid grazing youngstock on heavily contaminated pastures, particularly during warm, humid periods. Rotational grazing can help reduce pasture contamination, although care must be taken as infective larvae can survive for several weeks.

Mixed grazing with cattle may help dilute parasite burdens. Maintaining good nutrition also supports immunity and resilience. Care needs to be taken with land management.

Purchased animals represent a significant risk for introducing Haemonchus and resistant worms. Quarantine treatments and appropriate isolation periods should be considered for all incoming stock.

Combining diagnostics, targeted treatment and effective grazing management offers the best opportunity to minimise losses from this increasingly important parasite. If you have any questions please contact one of the farm vets at the practice.

TBAS visits

By Anne Abbs

A TBAS visit is a fully funded, time-limited opportunity to reduce bovine TB risk, protect herd health, and strengthen eligibility for annual testing where applicable. Across two structured visits, the service identifies practical risks from wildlife, cattle movements, and neighbouring herds, then, in conjunction with the farmer, agrees targeted actions to improve biosecurity and support longer-term herd resilience. For farms in hotspot areas, herds with recent inconclusive results or breakdowns, or businesses buying in cattle, the visit offers clear operational value with minimal downside.

During the visit we consider the risks of TB from wildlife, purchased cattle and cattle to cattle contact e.g. from your neighbours' cattle, showing, return from sale etc. We then identify a number of action points that you agree to make progress towards and that are reassessed at the second visit. Some of these may be structural, but may not be expensive, and some behavioural e.g. consider TB risk when making purchasing decisions.

So why would you want to have a visit?

- **If you are currently in a Hotspot.** There are a number of criteria for reducing your testing from 6 monthly to annually and one of these is that you have had a TBAS visit (you only need to have had the first one to qualify). The visit is a one off so even if you can't go to annual testing now it will still be valid in future.
- **If you purchase cattle** and want to understand how to minimise your risks. Data is now available on an individual animal basis in England and Wales so you can trace all the holdings an animal has been on in its lifetime and their TB history.
- **If you have a high health status herd** and want to maintain this status. A TBAS visit will support your biosecurity and reduce the risk of disease incursion.
- **If you have had an Inconclusive or TB breakdown.** A TBAS visit can help look at your risk factors and help you minimise the risks of the disease spreading to wildlife or neighbouring herds.

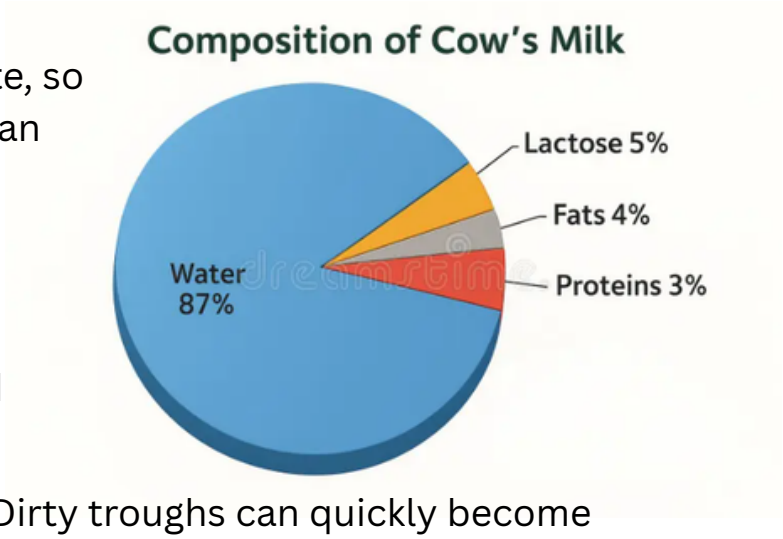
Contact the surgery to ensure that we can arrange a visit and secure funding.

Clean Water: A Simple Key to Health and Performance

By Paul Kirkwood

Clean, fresh water is the most important nutrient for farm animals. Water intake directly affects feed consumption, growth rates, milk production, fertility, and overall health. Even short periods of reduced water intake can have a significant impact on animal performance and welfare.

Animals must have sufficient drinking space to allow easy access, particularly during hot weather and after feeding. As a guide, provide at least 10 cm of trough edge per calf or sheep and up to 70cm per adult cow is needed. The trough space should also be sufficient for 10% of the herd to drink at once.



Cows can drink up to 14 litres/minute, so 10 cows drinking at the same time can consume 140 litres every minute, therefore water pressure is also extremely important. Water points should be positioned to minimise bullying and ensure youngstock and timid animals can drink freely.

Water quality is equally important. Dirty troughs can quickly become contaminated with feed, faeces, algae, and bacteria, reducing palatability and increasing the risk of disease. Young animals are especially vulnerable to infections associated with poor water hygiene.

Inspect water troughs daily to ensure they are functioning correctly and are free from contamination. As a minimum, troughs should be thoroughly cleaned once a week by emptying, scrubbing, and rinsing before refilling. During warm weather, or where algae growth and contamination occur more rapidly, cleaning may be required two or three times per week. Water bowls and drinkers used by calves and other youngstock should receive particular attention and may need more frequent cleaning.

Regular checks of water supply, cleanliness, and accessibility are simple management practices that can deliver substantial benefits. Clean water encourages higher intakes, supporting productivity, and helps maintain healthy livestock.

Show Season

Members of our team will be attending Skelton, Penrith & Dalston Show. We look forward to seeing you all there. Good luck to all exhibitors.

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