



AHI BULLETIN

CONTROL OF GUTWORMS IN WEANED CALVES AT GRASS

Gutworms

Weaned dairy or dairy cross calves and weaned suckler calves born last autumn are the group of cattle most at risk of gutworms at this time of the year. Clinically significant infections can be evident within a couple of months of turn-out, but calves can suffer subclinical losses even earlier. Parasite control plans may use strategic or 'wait and see' approaches to the use of anthelmintics to control gutworms. Spring born suckled calves generally do not require treatment for gutworms at this time of year, because their grass intake is low and additionally, milk has a protective effect against gutworms.

Dosing with anthelmintics generally will be required to control gutworms, particularly in weaned calves turned out onto high risk pasture (fields grazed by calves the previous year). The most commonly used practice is to treat calves within three weeks of turnout and repeat this at appropriate intervals (depending on the residual activity of the drug used) until mid-July ([click here](#) to view Table 3 in the 'Parasite Control at Turnout' leaflet for information on residual activity of anthelmintics).

An alternative approach, for weaned calves turned out onto 'safe' pastures (fields not grazed by cattle last year), is to weigh calves at turnout and monitor their daily live weight gain (DLWG) 6-8 weeks later and over the summer. An animal with a DLWG of less than 0.6 – 0.75kg per day indicates that gutworms are a problem (in the absence of other factors affecting performance) and treatment is required. A

pooled faecal sample can also be useful to confirm the presence or absence of gutworm eggs in the group. The second half of the grazing season is the main risk period for calves managed in this way and farmers must have effective monitoring in place to allow quick action to be taken, if necessary, or use group treatments from July onwards.

With both strategies calves should remain set-stocked, or move to aftergrass when this becomes available.

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Lungworm

Lungworm is generally not an issue early in the grazing season but it is important to remember that lungworm infection is unpredictable and all cattle at grass should be monitored for coughing.

Farmers should discuss strategic parasite control with their vet. For more information on control of these parasites [click here](#).