

Cryptosporidiosis

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Cryptosporidiosis is caused by a highly infectious parasite resulting in scour in young calves. The diarrhoea can be mild to severe and usually affects calves from 7-13 days old. Mortality can be high in calves that have other concurrent intestinal infections such as rotavirus and tends to be more common in calves that have received inadequate colostrum. The parasite is transmitted via the 'faecal-oral route'; infected calves pass the parasite eggs in their dung and these are ingested by other calves. Dung building up in calf pens, contaminated equipment, trailers or the clothes and boots of visitors to the calf shed can all contribute to the spread of the parasite.

Diagnosis

Clinical signs of disease include weakness, dehydration and profuse watery diarrhoea with strands of mucus. The scouring may last 5-12 days.

It is not possible to distinguish cryptosporidiosis from other forms of calf scour by the type of scour or clinical signs.

- Submit faecal samples (in sterile containers) from untreated, scouring calves in the early stages of a disease outbreak to your veterinary practitioner or laboratory.
- Take dead calves to a veterinary laboratory for post-mortem.
- How to treat the scouring calf.
- Remove all ill calves from the group and house them in a clean, warm, and dry environment.
- Give one or two extra feeds (2 litres each) of a good quality oral rehydration solution.
- Continue to offer scouring calves normal amounts of milk or milk replacer as long as they want to drink. Suckler calves should be left with their dams. Do not stomach tube milk to sick calves as it will enter the rumen and not be digested.
- Seek veterinary advice for treating the calves with halofuginone lactate (Halocur) or paromomycin (Parofor Crypto), which can reduce the severity of the infection.

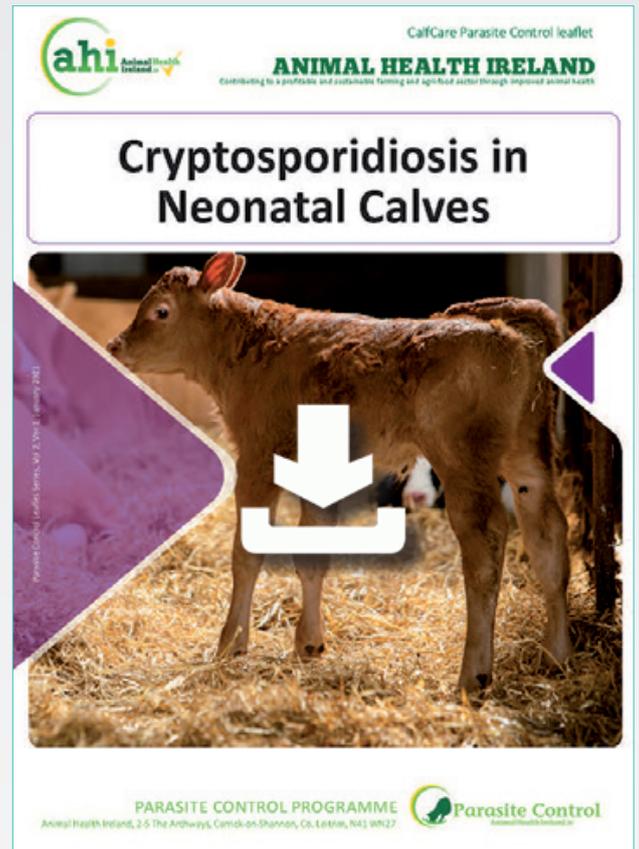
Disease control measures

Prevention and control measures for cryptosporidiosis should focus on hygiene. Anyone in contact with calves should wash their hands and ideally change their protective clothing and footwear between each group of calves. This is critical for those handling sick calves.

Ensure all calves receive three litres of good quality colostrum within the first two hours of birth.

House calves either individually or in small groups in suitably prepared pens/houses and replace or replenish bedding (straw etc.) every 2 days. Never mix newborn calves with calves older than 3-4 days. Follow strict hygiene with feeding equipment such as bottles and buckets and raise feeding and water troughs off the floor, at least 0.75m.

The infectious cryptosporidiosis oocysts are resistant to many commonly used disinfectants and it is difficult to eradicate once it is established on a farm. [Click here](#) to view the AHI leaflet, Cryptosporidiosis in neonatal calves, for a list of effective disinfectants and more information on controlling Cryptosporidiosis.



PARASITE CONTROL PROGRAMME

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