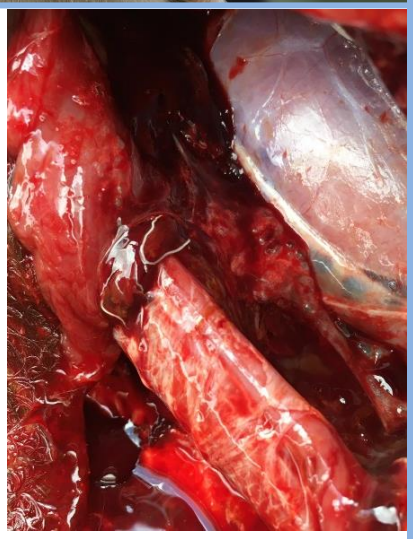
THE WOOD VETERINARY GROUP

FARM NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2025

Vaccinate against Lungworm pre-turnout, or cough up later



Most lungworm cases are reported at the back end of the autumn grazing season. However, lungworm larvae can overwinter on pasture and inside carrier cattle, causing infection from year to year. Naive cattle can pick up infection as soon as they are turned out in the spring. And if they do, it could be very costly. With a significant amount of pasture under water this seems a very distant problem but starting to plan now will pay off later.

It pays to vaccinate

Vaccination against lungworm is a no brainer. In a 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.

Home-reared replacement heifers tend to graze on a separate pasture away from the milking herd and are often treated with long-acting wormers, perhaps in both the first and second grazing seasons. When this replacement group enters the main herd, they have no immunity to lungworm and the risk of a disease outbreak at grass is very high. Lungworm is unpredictable and best controlled through vaccination especially targeting youngstock.

Boost immunity through vaccination

Huskvac is a live vaccine, made from irradiated lungworm larvae, which therefore can't cause disease.
Vaccination course:

- 2 doses
- 4 weeks apart
- 2nd dose 2 weeks prior to turnout to grass
- Wormers should not be given until two weeks after the final dose of vaccine

The vaccine allows a small number of lungworm from natural infection to complete their life-cycle. This means there is a continued development of natural immunity throughout the grazing season. Graze vaccinated heifers on old permanent leys avoiding clean pasture. Over-reliance on wormers does not allow this natural immunity to occur.

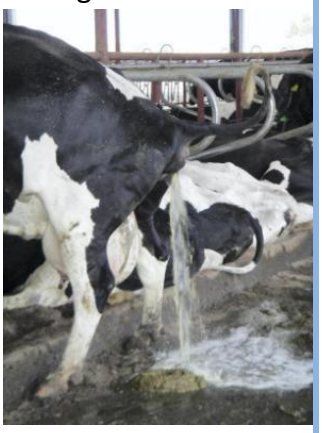
Vaccination with a pre-turnout course of Huskvac is the most reliable and cost-effective way of ensuring the development of immunity to lungworm. Please give us a call to discuss your parasite control plan for the spring and summer. Turnout may seem a long way off in this cold, wet weather but it will take 6 weeks from starting the course to turnout which will be late Feb at the earliest.

Don't forget that Ellie our Vet Tech is on hand to help administer Huskvac if you need another pair of hands – we know it's not the easiest one to do especially in youngsters or if you have lots to do.

Huskvac is estimated to be available from mid January this year so plan ahead to time vaccination! We would suggest buying 1st and 2nd doses together where batch expiry dates allow to avoid disappointment! Speak to the office team about how many doses you need and they will help plan order schedules

Leptospirosis

Despite some decline in prevalence, Lepto is still a common source of ABORTION, POOR FERTILITY and MILK DROP, with those that graze at the highest risk. However, year round housing is not a guaranteed safeguard due to the infection route.



The bacteria are shed in milk and from the kidneys into urine and can cause:

- **Reduced conception rate to as low as 15% in clinical outbreaks**
- **Decreased milk yield by 800 litres per lactation**
- **Higher abortion rates**
- **It can also cause 'flu like' symptoms in humans**

Lepto is present on farms due to:

- Contaminated water sources which can include all non-mains water sources including bore holes
- Persistently infected cows that shed despite vaccination (vaccine prevents clinical disease, not shedding)
- Rat activity contaminating water and feed
- Very poor forages with soil contamination (Lepto can survive for six months in wet soil)
- Indirect contact with the bacteria from bought in animals or co- grazing animals increases likely infection e.g.: Buying in animals, bull hiring, sheep grazing

In line with this, a certain amount can be done to reduce the risks on each farm but vaccination will always be a vital part of any plan:

- Primary course of 2 injections 4 weeks apart
- 2nd dose 2 or more weeks before turnout
- Annual booster 2 weeks before turnout
- Vaccinate all breeding animals – i.e. heifers prior to first service too

Is it a problem on your farm?

Do a BULK MILK TEST or BEEF BLOODS – 1 bulk milk or 10 bloods. Grazing herds can always sample at the end of each summer/autumn to review their risk status. Speak to us to get these tests booked in.

Flooding

With large amounts of the area under deep water causing unknown damage to spring grazing, peaks in disease such as pneumonia and mastitis seem inevitable.

We need to consider what risks remain after the water returns to the river:

- Flooded pastures will be high risk for Leptospirosis infection especially to unvaccinated animals so make sure vaccinations are done well ahead of turnout
- The main contaminants will be from flood water with human or livestock faecal material in it such as Salmonella and Cryptosporidium
- Hydrocarbons from fuel can also be an issue from main road run off. Be aware of local industrial plants that may have leached chemicals into standing water
- Where flood water has eroded the soil it can expose soil based bacteria such as Anthrax to the air causing spores
- Be conscious of Liver Fluke as the extended flooding will have increased the mud snail habitat to areas that haven't previously been a risk for fluke infection

Avoid using previously flooded pastures for as long as possible. UV light and drying out will help to reduce the risks from biological contaminants. This will also promote new shoot growth and root development ensuring more pasture survives into the grazing season.