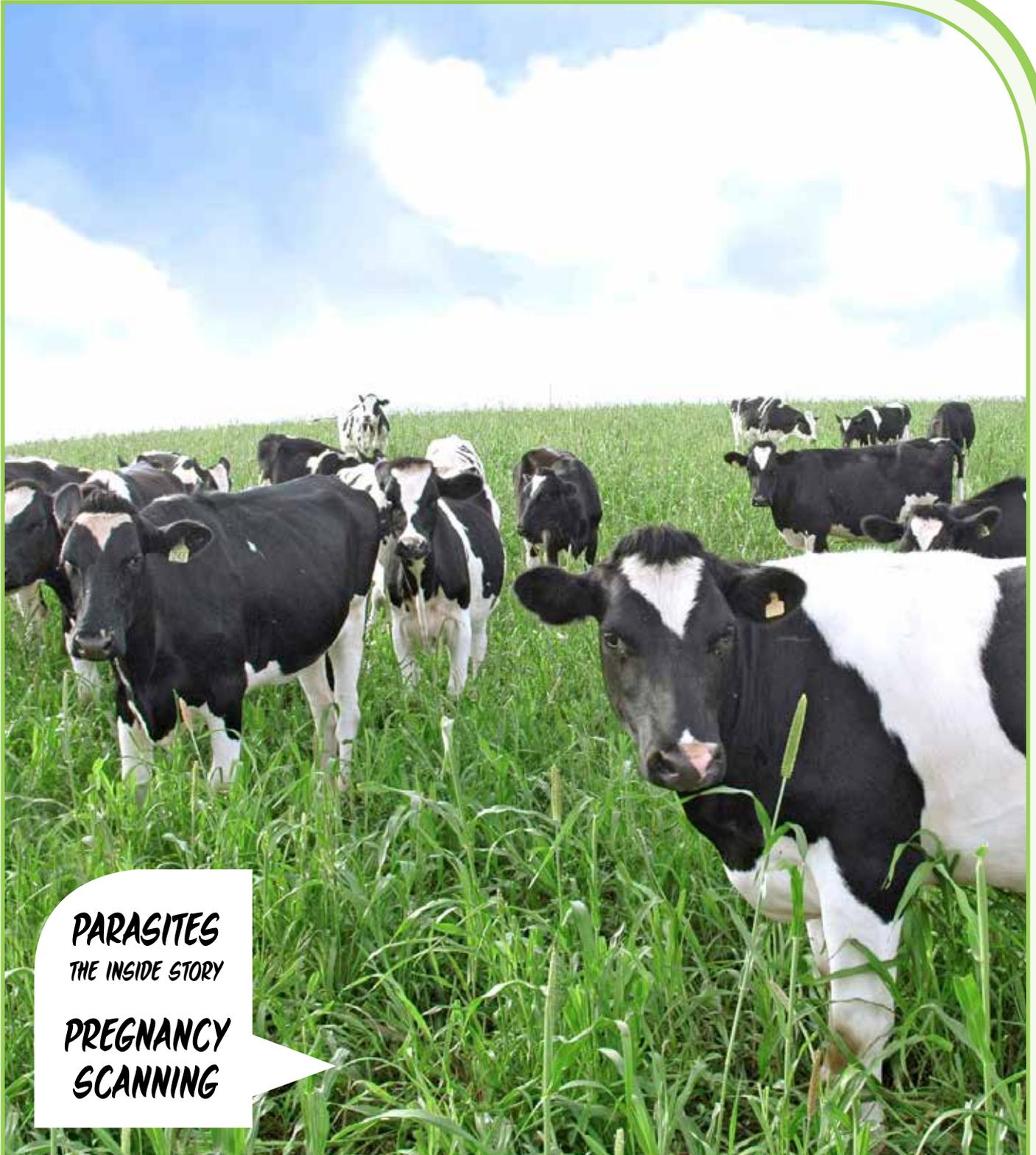




Prime Health Vets

Newsletter



PARASITES
THE INSIDE STORY

**PREGNANCY
SCANNING**

Parasites – The Inside Story



This is the time of the year most farmers in our area will have young stock at grass and so parasite control should be top of the priority list.

Calves are born free of parasites but pick up the infective stages of these parasites while at grass. The common parasites cattle are exposed to and the clinical signs associated with disease are as follows:

Stomach & Intestinal worms (Gutworms)	Lungworms	Liver Fluke & Rumens Fluke (*1)
Diarrhoea & weight loss	Hoarse/ coughing & difficulty breathing. This in turn increases susceptibility to pneumonia (bacterial & viral)	Loss of condition Lower productivity. Increased susceptibility to other diseases (e.g. Salmonella and I.B.R.)

(*1) It may be unnecessary to treat calves for fluke until the Autumn and/or at housing as spring-born calves will initially carry no liver fluke. However, if they graze heavily infested pastures they can be exposed to fluke from early on in the season. Advice may vary depending on weather, fluke forecast and farm history.



This article will focus mainly on Gutworms and Lungworms.

Because infection with these parasites can build-up over the grazing season, the period of greatest risk of illness and poor performance is from now until housing. This is especially true if no mid-season control measures are put in place.

It should also be remembered that grass quality & availability also affects performance and the combined effects of parasitism & poor nutrition can be severe.

Some Important Considerations in Parasite Control:



Differences in age categories:

First Season Grazers initially have no immunity to parasites and are at the greatest risk of worm infestations. Dairy and suckler calves must be considered separately:

Dairy calves are exposed to infection as soon as they are turned out; significant infections can develop within a couple of months of turnout.

Initially suckler calves are at a low risk as they are grazing with their dams and have a low grass intake. Their greatest period of risk is after weaning in late Summer & Autumn

SECOND SEASON GRAZERS are not fully immune to Gut- and Lungworms and can experience production loss and occasionally disease. Lack of exposure to infection during the 1st grazing season (“late calves”, suckler calves, or intensive dosing regimens) can result in lower immunity levels at the start of the second grazing season [Re-infection syndrome].

ADULT CATTLE/ COWS. It is rare for adult cattle & cows to show clinical signs of gutworms, but subclinical infections have been associated with production losses (decreased milk yield, poor B.C.S., and decreased fertility). Some cows may develop coughing/ milk-drop if exposed to heavy lungworm larval challenge. [Re-infection syndrome].

Re-infection Syndrome:

Immunity to lungworm develops quickly but is relatively short lasting (about 6 months) in the absence of further infection; thus, at the start of each grazing season cattle may have little or no immunity to lungworm and are susceptible to new infections again.

Monitoring Parasite Levels:

- We can collect dung samples from 10 – 15 calves/ cattle during routine visits. If more convenient, you can collect sampling pots and return them (filled) for us to send them to an approved laboratory. Note: Ensure that samples are as fresh as possible (i.e. do not pick samples from the ground)
- The lab will determine the faecal egg count (FEC) and the presence of lungworm larvae., and from that we can evaluate the effect on performance.
- Bulk milk testing for gutworm, liver fluke and lungworm is also available. However, the results of bulk milk samples only indicate the presence (or absence) of antibodies resulting from prior or current exposure to these parasites. Since antibodies remain in the animals for several months, they do not necessarily indicate active infection or disease. The interpretation of these test results needs to be done in the context of overall herd health where such samples are done 3-4 times/year..

Weighing:

- Weighing of calves should also be considered if a satisfactory Daily Liveweight Gain (DLWG) is not being attained.

In the era of computers & iPhones it is important to remember that good Stockmanship is still essential; a good stockman will pick-up on mild clinical signs and control measures can be put in place to limit the damage caused by these parasites.

Dosing Options: Dairy

- If clean pasture is available (new/ reseeded pasture or silage aftergrass), it is now recommended that animals are held on the “dirty” pasture for about 2 days after dosing prior to moving to “clean” pasture. New research suggests that this minimises the risk of anthelmintic resistance. If FEC's and DLWG have been ascertained then it may be advisable to treat only those calves with a high FEC and/ or low DLWG.
- If clean grass is not available then the entire group should be dosed and depending on how long the product protects animals from re-infection with worms, further monitoring/ dosing is recommended approx. 8 weeks later (or less if the worm challenge is high).

Dosing Options: Sucklers

- Spring-born suckler calves are rarely affected by gutworms before weaning, and autumn is their period of greatest risk. However, lungworm may cause problems in young stock before and after weaning. Knowledge of the history of lungworm on the farm and careful observation of calves for coughing will help manage this problem as treatment with an appropriate anthelmintic is recommended if coughing is observed in calves.
- If calves are weaned while still at grass then, depending on the availability of clean grazing, an anthelmintic treatment with persistent action would cover the period until housing.

Choosing a Dosing Product:

Because we know the risk factors on your farm, we can help you design a programme that suits your grazing management using one or more of the range of products we carry. For example...

What is the product active against (e.g. gutworms, lungworms, fluke?)

How is it to be administered/ ease of use (e.g. oral, pour-on, injectable)

What is the duration of activity? (Varies with time of year, availability of clean grass, different management groups etc.

Your local vet is best placed to provide you with information which is relevant to your individual farm.



Worm eggs seen in a sample of faeces.
(Under microscope)



Lungworm larva (Under microscope)

Pregnancy scanning

At this stage, (early-mid June), many of you will have had the early pregnancy scan on cows and heifers you served in April/May. Even though pregnancy can be detected from around day 25, 10% of them will be lost and therefore, it is better to wait at least 35 days post service to scan.

Early pregnancy scanning can be very helpful on a number of fronts:

- 1. Empty cows that have not been seen "repeating" can be brought back into heat.*
- 2. A lot of empty cows (due to embryonic death) may indicate diseases such as BVD, Neospora etc. in the herd. It may also indicate a sub-fertile bull or problems with A.I*
- 3. A pregnancy scan can be accurately aged up to day 110.*
- 4. It may be possible to detect twins before day 90*

More and more dairy farmers are asking their vet to make regular fertility visits. It's not just large herds that are seeing the financial benefits of a tighter calving interval - small herds can also profit from routine visits.

Getting your vet involved regularly and setting targets are essential steps for anyone wanting to improve fertility. Around 40% of dairy cows develop metritis within the first week post-calving. These can be treated with non milk withdrawal drugs. Half of these go on to develop clinical endometritis ("whites") with subclinical (no signs) being even more common. While everyone is familiar with the problem of whites, studies have shown that as many as 50% of cases could be missed.

Most cows need 6 weeks after calving before they are ready to resume the new season of breeding.

During the early pregnancy scan all late calvers should have their pre-breeding scan. This will pick up any uterine infections (which can be treated as mentioned above) and also those cows that are not cycling. Provided that the condition score of the latter group is adequate, they may be started on a synchronising action protocol that includes an intra-uterine progesterone device followed by fixed-time A.I. This should help to tighten the calving pattern for next year.

The earlier cows/heifers calve next year, the longer they will have to recover before the following breeding season – the most important period of which is the first 3 weeks because that dictates the following year's calving pattern. It is vital that the submission rate is maximised during the narrow window of time.

Having your vet on the farm on a regular basis also provides the opportunity to discuss other herd matters and raise issues which on their own seem small, but nevertheless impact on profit margins.

Date for Your Diary October 3rd, 2012
"Healthy stock for higher profit"

More details in next issue.