

Husk

As we look to the summer grazing season, cattle lungworm control should be a major consideration this year. Lungworm in cattle is caused by a specific worm called *Dictyocaulus viviparus* and in many regions may be known as 'husk' or 'hoose'.

Lungworm has the potential to cause serious disease in cattle, particularly first grazing season animals so control needs to be planned and in place before turnout. Disease can be seen as coughing and respiratory disease in animals at grass, or more severely can cause reduced milk yields in adult cattle and long term lung damage reducing lifetime performance.

Disease follows when animals pick up infective larvae from the pasture, the larvae then migrate from the intestines to the lungs where they become adults and produce eggs hatching to larvae, these are then coughed up, swallowed and expelled in dung onto the pasture. Immunity is usually acquired after being exposed in the first grazing season and older animals are unlikely to succumb to disease unless large numbers of larvae are encountered.

This year we're potentially looking at a higher risk of lungworm than normal due to the weather conditions over winter. With warmer, wetter conditions the larvae spread quicker on the pasture and less larvae are killed off over winter, so will be present to provide early infection.

One method of control in high risk areas is vaccination – a live vaccine is available which mimics infection of the worm without causing disease. On farms with problems previously or in wetter areas vaccination of first grazing season animals would be recommended, but it is important to plan this well in advance. Two doses of the vaccine need to be given 4 weeks apart and the second dose completed 2 weeks before meeting risky pasture or unvaccinated animals. The vaccine is live so only has a very short life and stocks can run out, so the earlier plans are made and orders are placed the better prepared we can all be!

For further information please contact our Sevenoaks practice on 01959 564383.

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