

COCCIDIOSIS WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Have you ever thought coccidiosis could be making your young calves and lambs not achieve their daily live weight gain potential? Our vet Alex Bearman BVetMed MRCVS explains a little more:

WHAT IS IT?

Coccidiosis is a very common disease that can be found in most farm animals. It is caused by Eimeria which are microscopic protozoan parasites. Coccidia eggs are passed in the faeces of infected animals and go on to infect other animals. Eggs can persist in the environment for long periods of time, often more than 12 months in sheds, poached ground or in water sources.

CLINICAL SIGNS

Coccidiosis causes severe scouring in lambs often including blood and mucous and can lead to severe weight loss and death. Lambs are usually affected when they are between 3-12 weeks old, once exposed sheep develop a good immunity to the parasite and it doesn't tend to cause a problem in older lambs or ewes.

RISK FACTORS FOR COCCIDIOSIS ARE:



HIGH CHALLENGE
Faeces in water or food
Dirty condition
High stocking density
Older lambs previously in field

SUSCEPTIBLE LAMBS
3-12 weeks old
Not previously exposed to coccidia
Stress due to cold, wet weather
Stress due to poor nutrition



HOW THE DAMAGE IS DONE:

As it progresses through its life cycle this parasite reproduces within the cells that line the gut causing the cells to rupture and damaging the villi (finger like projections that increase the surface of the gut to maximise absorption of nutrients).

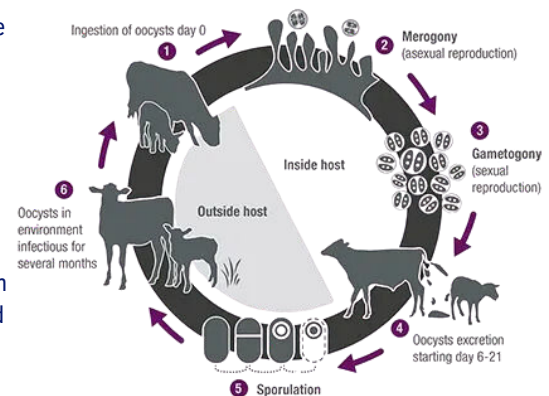
This damage reduces the amount of nutrients absorbed, causing ill health, poor growth rates and leaving them susceptible to other diseases. However, the obvious signs of disease (such as diarrhoea) do not appear until after a significant level of damage has already happened, leading to reduced growth rate and economic loss. The consequences of this lifecycle being allowed to continue can be devastating. A single ingested oocyst can lead to the destruction of 32 million intestinal cells (and result in serious gut damage) and lead to the production of a further 16 million oocysts to further contaminate the environment.

TREATMENT

Specific oral drenches and medicated diets are used to treat coccidiosis and work by reducing the severity of the disease and decreasing the shedding of eggs. As it is very contagious all of the lambs in the group should be treated. Depending on the drench used some animals will need a repeat treatment to kill any parasites that have hatched and re-infected the lambs after the first treatment.

PREVENTION

Prevention is much more effective than treatment of coccidiosis. Hygiene is the most important element to stop disease spreading. When housed pens should be completely cleaned out and disinfected between groups. On pasture manage the risk of disease by keeping stocking density low, not mixing different ages or grazing young lambs where older lambs have been previously. Timed treatment can be used on high risk farms to prevent the coccidia completing its lifecycle.





HAVE YOU CONSIDERED LEAD POISONING?

Now that animals are being turned out we like to think that farmers will get a little respite from having the vet out, warmer weather, cattle out to graze and the chance to crack on with other jobs around the farm. However recent statistics from the SAC show that there may be more dangers out in the fields than you initially think. Through May to August there is a clear peak in the diagnoses of lead poisoning cases with 74% of diagnoses made during these summer months after turn out, with younger stock more susceptible.

The main causes of poisoning on farms are lead and copper. We advise that you take these five steps to avoid this happening:

- Check that vehicle and fence batteries are stored securely and out of reach of animals.
- Check fields and fences for fly-tipping before putting animals out to pasture.
- Has the fence line been damaged by a car accident on icy roads over the winter? Have all remains, particularly the battery of the vehicle been removed?
- Be aware of bonfire ash remaining in a field as a potential source of lead.
- Check buildings and equipment for old lead paint peeling off.

Most poisoning incidents are caused by lead, which can impact the health of animals and put consumers at risk. It can also result in animals being restricted from the food chain until lead levels in their systems are proved safe.

This leads to financial costs to you as as the Food Standard Agency may restrict animals for slaughter and require you to pay for animals to be tested for lead.

Clinical presentations of acute disease to be aware of include:

- Sudden death
- Blindness
- Ataxia, convulsions, hyperaesthesia
- Abdominal distention
- Teeth grinding

If you are concerned about suspect cases, please do not hesitate to get in touch and we will happily advise. From a sampling perspective there are a number of options that the vet can look at for you; heparinised blood samples, (or if post mortem) fresh kidney and fixed brain for histopathology are useful samples / tissues to collect.

HAVE YOU BOOKED YOUR ANIMAL HEALTH & WELFARE PATHWAY VISIT?

DATES FOR THE DIARY

Make sure you have the Summer Shows in you diary

BURWARTON SHOW

DATE: Thursday 1st August 2024

One of the very best one day agricultural shows. Severn Edge Farm will be there as a lead sponsor and offering client hospitality throughout the day.

TENBURY COUNTRYSIDE SHOW

DATE: Saturday 3rd August 2024

Tenbury Countryside Show is located on the A456, close to Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire, WR15 8AR

WEBSITE: Please note that we have a new website- www.severnedgefarm.co.uk.

Remember your Red Tractor Health Plan or VAN can be included!



TB CORNER

Over the past few weeks we have seen a rise in the number of Reactors and Inconclusive Reactors on farm. This is a good time to remind you all that we have TBAS Advisers within the practice that are here and ready to help.

The adviser is there to help and will not judge you or your farm. The idea is you and your TBAS vet can look at TB as an infectious disease and the recommendations are the start of an action plan to reduce your risk and length of a TB breakdown.

On the visit we will ask about your farm set up, the concerns you currently have regarding TB, and issues you may face in the future. If you have a Farm Level Data Pack from APHA, it would be useful to share this with us. They will then have a walk around your farm buildings and fields to better understand your current situation. Throughout the visit the we will identify potential areas where TB risk could be eliminated or reduced discussing why these are risks and how you can control them. At the end of the visit we will agree on four recommendations you can carry out before your follow up visit.



T: 01746 713 911

E: farmadmin@severnedgevets.co.uk

Severn Edge Farm Vets
Bridgnorth Agricultural Centre, Wenlock Road
Bridgnorth, WV16 4QR