Breaking the grip of parasites

The correct timing of treatment and selecting the right products are critical to ensuring cattle remain in good health when housed for the winter, writes Gordon Peppard.

The number of parasites carried by cattle at housing can vary according to a number of factors, their health, breeding management and level of previous treatments. Before housing, farms should ensure they have a spring turnout of dewormed and treated cattle. Without treatment these parasites can develop into adults. Reducing the risk by causing a drop in egg numbers reduces the threat of infestations. Consequently, gutworms and liver fluke are the two most common parasites that affect cattle in housing situations. These parasites can cause significant losses to the herd. Therefore, an effective treatment programme shortly after housing cattle is essential to keeping the cycle going. Housing is one of the best times to break the cycle and treat cattle against the most common internal and external parasites. Independent veterinary advice is very important, but be sure to check the label for efficacy and ingredients are found in combination products, but be sure to consider the rationale for their control and the correct timing of the treatment. The correct questions to answer are: Many of the above active ingredients are found in combination products, but be sure to consult your vet if you have a long withdrawal period, and awareness that flukicides tend to have a relatively short period of efficacy. For cattle that are to be turned out to pasture or are slaughtered, a further dose is required. Finishing stock on high concentrate diets will have a big demand for water and must never be left without water. Be careful when giving water to very thirsty cattle as over-drinking can cause severe problems.

Soil fertility testing is the foundation of good farming

Don't give stock water you wouldn't drink yourself

Water is the main constituent of the animal’s body, making up to 70% of the animal’s weight, depending on age and degree of fattening. The animal can lose almost all of its fat and up to 10% of its body weight during high stress. However, the loss of body water can be dangerous. The Teagasc Green Acres programme requires a minimum of two faecal worm egg counts per year. A good water supply is defined both in terms of quantity and quality of the water. Therefore, animals are under stress if fresh water and the water should be of a high enough quality that you could drink it yourself. It is important to be obtained by the animal from different sources, from the food, from drinking supply and from metabolic activities in the body. The amount of water required by a stock animal will vary greatly depending on the dry matter of the feed. An animal eating grass with a dry matter of 75% will need less water than an animal eating grass with a dry matter of 85%, each animal with a fat content will increase the amount of drinking water accordingly. If the temperature in the pig house is raised, the requirement also rises. Finishing stock on high concentrate diets will have a big demand for water and must never be left without water. Be careful when giving water to very thirsty cattle as over-drinking can cause severe problems.