Teagasc Advisory Newsletter

BEEF

December 2018

Product and timing critical for good parasite control

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Treatment of parasites is essential if we want to reduce the risk of disease and increase animal performance.

Housing is an opportunity for parasite control in cattle, with gutworms, lungworm and liver fluke the main targets. Treatment is essential if we want to reduce the risk of disease and optimise animal performance. Winter is also the most common time to see infestations with external parasites such as lice and mange mites and

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these should be considered when selecting treatments. Injectable and pour-on products can be used for mange and sucking lice but only pour-on products are effective against biting lice.

One consequence of the dry summer is the knock-on effect on the parasite risk. Build up of stomach worms and lungworm were delayed so symptoms appeared much later in the summer.

The main concern here is lungworm. Farmers that are currently dosing are reporting that weanlings are coughing severely after dosing, with some cases of hoose pneumonia being diagnosed.

Weanlings most at risk are those that are only receiving their first dose now. So be vigilant after dosing and ensure sheds are well ventilated and not overstocked.

The risk of liver fluke infection in the 2018 Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) forecast is moderate along the western seaboard and midlands, with a lower risk in parts of the east and south of the country. If you have fluke on the farm then it would be prudent to treat.

The success of the treatment depends on ensuring you time dosing in line with the active ingredient in the product you have chosen.

In other words, if the product you use only kills adult fluke, then to be effective it needs to be given 10 weeks after housing if you only want to give a single dose.

Similarly a product that kills immature and adult fluke should be given seven weeks after housing on a one-dose programme.

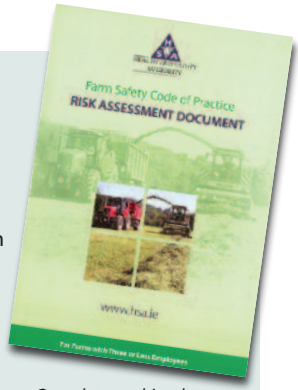
Triclabendazole will kill all stages of fluke from early immature through to adult, so can be given as early as two weeks after housing.

Checking on the Animal Health Ireland (AHI) Beef Healthcheck reports on slaughtered animals or faecal sampling after dosing will help you determine if your current fluke dosing programme is effective or needs to be reviewed with your vet.

HEALTH & SAFETY

A good time to plan a safe new year

December is the month to 'wind down' and enjoy the festive season with family and friends. It can also be a time for reflection in advance of the busy spring period. Farm safety and health requires farm planning on a routine basis. The new green-coloured Risk Assessment Document is required to be completed by December 31. Completing this practical document is a means to prevent injury and ill health. Most importantly, implement any health or safety actions that require your attention. Also, care is needed with items such as lighting and candles in the home.



Complete and implement your Risk Assessment Document.

RESEARCH UPDATE

Cutting through the bull

E. G. O'Riordan, M. McGee and A. P Moloney of AGRIP, Teagasc Grange examined carcass growth and feed efficiency of early and late-maturing breed suckler bulls.

A study was undertaken at Teagasc Grange to compare spring-born early- (EM) and late- (LM) maturing breed suckler bulls produced on two contrasting production systems and slaughtered at three carcass weights. Animals were purchased as weanlings at commercial marts in autumn.

The EM breed category comprised Aberdeen Angus- and Hereford-sired animals with a mean initial liveweight of 338kg.

The LM breed category comprised Charolais- and Limousin-sired animals with a mean initial weight of 369kg. The two production systems were: 1) a high-concentrate (*ad libitum*) diet until they reached a target carcass weight of 340, 380 or 420kg; and, 2) *ad libitum* grass silage plus 2kg concentrates per head daily for the winter, then grazed pasture for 100 days, and following rehousing, *ad libitum* concentrate diet until slaughter at the same target carcass weights, i.e., 340, 380 or 420kg.

When averaged across the two production systems and three carcass weights, the LM bulls had a one unit better carcass conformation and a one-unit lower carcass fat score (15-point scale) than the EM bulls. Due to their lower kill-out proportion (548 v 566g/kg) EM bulls needed to be, on average, 21kg liveweight heavier at slaughter to achieve the same carcass weight as LM bulls. Additionally, LM bulls were approximately 40 days younger at slaughter than EM bulls at the same carcass weight.

For system 1 (*ad libitum* concentrates throughout), daily liveweight gain decreased from 1.61 to 1.60 and to 1.46kg/day as LM bulls grew to carcass weights of 340, 380 and 420kg, respectively.

LM bulls had an estimated carcass gain of 0.83 and 0.82kg/day as carcass weight increased from 340 to 380kg, and from 380 to 420kg, respectively.

The corresponding liveweight gain values for EM bulls were 1.59, 1.42 and 1.32kg/day and carcass gains of 0.63 and 0.61kg/day. As both breed types had similar feed dry matter (DM) intake, the feed conversion rate (FCR) to carcass (kg DM intake/kg carcass gain) was approximately 11.6:1 and 15.3:1, respectively, for the LM and EM bulls. In other words, EM bulls consumed 32% more feed than LM bulls to achieve the same carcass gain.

On system 2, when finally housed and placed on the *ad libitum* concentrate diet, LM bulls had a liveweight gain of 1.61kg/day (over the short housing period needed to reach the 340kg carcass target), and a gain of 2.01 and 1.63kg/day when taken to carcass weights of 380 and 420kg, respectively.

For these LM bulls, carcass gain was 1.7kg/day between 340 and 380kg and 1.0kg/day between 380 and 420kg carcass.

Corresponding liveweight values for EM bulls were 2.19, 2.10 and 1.15kg/day and carcass growth rates of 1.1kg and 0.65kg/day. As expected, FCR decreased as carcass weight increased, but LM bulls had a better FCR (10.6:1 vs. 14.9:1) than EM bulls. EM bulls consumed 41% more feed than LM bulls for the same carcass gain.

BETTER FARM UPDATE

Teagasc/Irish Farmers Journal BETTER FARM BEEF CHALLENGE

Redstart on the menu in Waterford

Due to the extreme weather this year, one Waterford farmer decided to plant a fodder crop.

Maurice Hearne is Waterford's representative in the current phase of the Teagasc/Irish Farmers Journal BETTER Farm Beef Challenge. Maurice is running a mixed beef, sheep and tillage enterprise on 117ha near Dunmore East in Waterford. Like the majority of farmers on lighter soil, and especially those located in the south east of the country, it has been a difficult period for Maurice.

The extended dry spell over the summer resulted in a significant reduction in grass growth. This reduction, coupled with the difficult spring, resulted in a huge challenge trying to build depleted fodder reserves and maintain grass in front of stock. First-cut silage was rounded up by the end of May and returned reasonably well considering the late spring.

All ground was subsequently fertilised, with the aim of taking a second cut by the end of July, but when the drought set in grass growth ceased meaning there was no second cut got until September. Yield of the second cut was significantly lower than was required and to add to the problem, quite a bit of the first cut had been used in maintaining grazing stock. When a predicted fodder budget was completed the middle of July, quite a significant fodder deficit was imminent. To try and offset the predicted deficit and bolster forage reserves, the decision was made to plant 20ha of redstart on tillage ground once harvesting was complete.

The crop was sown at the end of August and received 90 units of nitrogen (N). The crop was left to establish for approximately 100-110 days before stock started grazing. Cuts were taken at the end of October to predict yield and at that time it was estimated a crop of approximately 4.2t/ha of dry matter would be obtained. Grazing of the crop has started over the past few weeks. Stock were introduced slowly to the crop to prevent any digestive upset and allow the acclimatisation from grazed grass to the brassica to take place. Stock are currently being strip grazed and are given a daily allocation. Strip grazing will ensure maximum utilisation and minimum wastage. Baled silage is being used as the fibre source and accounts for approximately 30% of the animals' intake. Stock were also given two high iodine boluses two weeks prior to going onto the forage crop. To date grazing of the crop is going well, with ground conditions remaining very favourable and stock appearing content and healthy.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family a happy christmas and a peaceful and productive 2019.

Teagasc Agriculture and Food Development Authority

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