24 HOUR DEDICATED FARM COVER

RCVS ACCREDITED PRACTICE FARM ANIMAL PRACTICE

TEL: 01729 823538

Dalehead Veterinary Group Ltd

STATION ROAD, SETTLE BD24 9AA

MOUNT PLEASANT, HIGH BENTHAM LA2 7LE

GISBURN AUCTION MART, GISBURN BB7 4ES

FARM ANIMAL NEWSLETTER - JANUARY 2026

CRYPTOSPORIDIOSIS IN CALVES

'Crypto' is the most frequently diagnosed cause of scours in calves, typically seen at 7-14 days of age but can strike at any age.

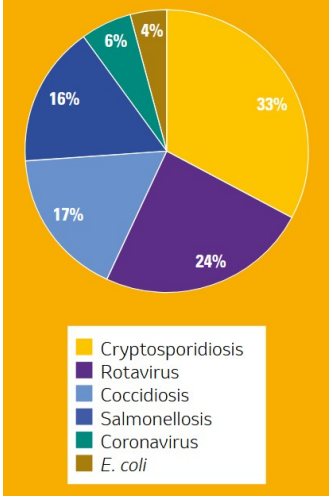
Where do calves pick up cryptosporidia from?

Large numbers of eggs (oocysts) are shed in the faeces of infected calves and cows (a scouring calf can pass millions of oocysts per gram of faeces) with the ingestion of as few as 20 oocysts being capable of setting off the disease process. Once ingested the parasite attaches to the gut wall and multiplies. This causes damage to the intestinal lining which reduces the calf's ability to digest food, resulting in a watery scour. While attached to the gut wall the parasite produces eggs which can either re-infect the calf or be shed into the environment via the infected calf's scour. Symptoms of disease appear 3 – 5 days after infection and a calf can shed the eggs for at least 2 weeks. The oocysts which are passed into the environment can survive for many months and are resistant to many commonly used disinfectants.

Diagnosis

Veterinary examination of scour samples is important for accurate diagnosis of the cause. We can test samples at the surgery for evidence of crypto with results available the same day.

Calf diagnoses by pathogen 2019-2023[4]



Prevention

- Ensure adequate intakes of good quality colostrum ASAP after birth. **10% of calf's bodyweight in the first 6 hours of life (i.e. 4 litres for a 40kg calf).**
- Managing the level of infection in the environment by good hygiene and effective disinfection **(e.g. Neogen or Hydrogen peroxide based disinfectants).**
- Vaccination. Many calf scours are caused by a mixture of different infectious agents. Vaccination of cows against Rotavirus, Coronavirus and K99 E Coli may be recommended and there is now a Cryptosporidia vaccine that can be given to cows to pass protection on to their calves through their colostrum and transition milk.

The 5 Qs of colostrum explained

	EXPLANATION	TARGET	ACTIONS REQUIRED
QUANTITY	Ensure all calves receive adequate colostrum	Calves should ingest minimum 1 litre/10kg bodyweight quickly plus another follow up feed	• Observe at least 20-30 minutes of suckling • Measure colostrum accurately and feed via nipple feeder • If other methods not possible, tube feed colostrum
QUALITY	Measure colostrum quality – fed and stored – to ensure minimal standards before feeding	At least 50g/l of antibodies (IgG)	Brix Refractometer reading of 22% or higher for all colostrum fed
QUICKLY	Ensure colostrum is ingested promptly	1 litre/10kg bodyweight within 4-6 hrs and repeated again within 12 hrs	Be aware of time post calving with protocol in place for all times of day/night
SQUEAKY CLEAN	Colostrum contamination with dirt and organic matter will affect protection provided and risks introducing disease	Harvest colostrum hygienically. Feed quickly or store hygienically in fridge or freezer. Ensure feeding equipment is clean	Store for a maximum of 1 hour out of fridge, always covered. Use refrigerated colostrum within 2 days. Use frozen colostrum within 12 months.
QUANTIFY	'Ask' the calves if colostrum management has been effective	Ensure calves have Total Protein levels over 5.2mg/ml	Regular vet-led blood sampling of calves aged 1-7 days old

Treatment

Calves with diarrhoea are likely to become dehydrated and it is imperative to provide rehydration therapy usually in the form of electrolytes. Scouring calves often benefit from being fed more regularly and ensuring that they are kept warm with jackets or under heat lamps. In addition there are specific treatments to prevent Cryptosporidia from multiplying inside the calf—please speak to one of the farm vets to discuss treatments or prevention (including vaccination) in greater detail.

FLUKE UPDATE

We have seen a significant increase in the number of diagnoses of active liver fluke infection in the last month, either from blood sampling lambs for liver fluke antibodies (lambs will test positive within 2-3 weeks of picking up immature fluke), liver fluke eggs in dung samples (detects presence of adult fluke in the animal) and on post mortem examination of dead animals which have died of acute fluke infection.

To discuss whether you need to test or dose for fluke and which products would be the most appropriate to use please contact the surgery. **If you are signed up for the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway for sheep and have completed your initial review, you could carry out the Endemic Disease Follow Up for liver fluke infection and have the laboratory investigation subsidised and a bespoke fluke control plan drawn up for your farm.**

COPPER DEFICIENCY IN PREGNANT EWES

Swayback in lambs occurs as a consequence of a severe copper deficiency in ewes during mid to late pregnancy. The breed of sheep and the nature of the feed can have a big influence on the likelihood of copper deficiency. Suffolks and Texels are very efficient at absorbing copper from the diet and therefore less likely to become copper deficient than other breeds. If you are unsure of the copper status of your ewes, and are wondering whether there is a need to supplement the dietary copper, a blood test can help. Sampling six pregnant ewes can give an indication of the copper status of your flock. If copper supplementation is required, there are a few options available:

Copper Drench

'Newhouse' or 'Swayback' drench. The amount of copper which can be given in one dose is limited because of the potential toxicity. These drenches can therefore only give a short term boost to the liver levels. Ewes may need to be drenched twice. Firstly in mid-pregnancy and again one month later. It is not advisable to treat for liver fluke at the same time as giving a copper drench.

Copper Capsules

These are a gelatine capsule containing copper oxide needles. They are administered orally to ewes either before tupping or during the first half of pregnancy. The copper needles attach to the wall of the abomasum and dissolve slowly over 3-4 weeks allowing efficient uptake and storage of copper in the liver with minimal risk of toxicity. Liver copper levels can remain increased for at least 6 months.

Copper injections

Copper injections give a rapid, short term (2-4 months) increase in copper levels. The injection is administered as a single 2ml subcutaneous injection during mid-pregnancy.

Please talk to one of the farm vets if you would like to discuss blood testing ewes for copper status or about the various product options available. TRACE ELEMENT BLOOD TESTING CAN BE FUNDED THROUGH THE ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE PATHWAY ENDEMIC DISEASE FOLLOW UP.

FOOT ROT VACCINATION—THE RIGHT TIME TO ACT

Vaccinating your flock against foot rot is an effective tool for reducing infection levels both on pasture and during housing at lambing. This time of year is particularly suitable, as vaccination can be combined with routine handling such as scanning or flukicide administration.

Why vaccinate now?

- Sheep are already gathered, so no additional handling is required.
- The vaccine is not being administered alongside another vaccine, such as the pre-lambing booster.
- It is well timed in relation to lambing: The data sheet advises not to administer the vaccine four weeks before or four weeks after lambing.
- Vaccination provides protection going into the lambing period, when foot health is especially important.
- Reducing infection levels on pasture helps protect lambs when they move on to graze.

As part of the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway Endemic Disease Follow Up, you can receive funding for a lameness assessment to be completed. A planned foot rot vaccination programme can be designed which can significantly improve your flock's health, welfare and productivity going into lambing.

E. COLI MASTITIS IN DAIRY CATTLE

E. coli mastitis is a common environmental cause of mastitis and can be very frustrating when we start seeing outbreaks and sick cows that can result in fatalities. It has significant impacts on milk yield, milk quality, treatment costs and culling rates with some research suggesting up to 200L of milk lost per case.

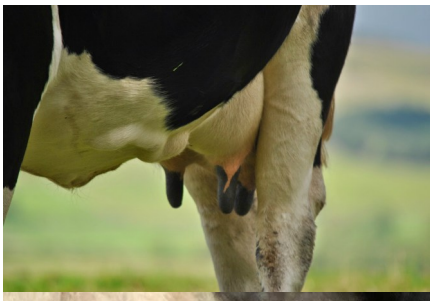
Unlike other causes of mastitis, the bacteria tend not to linger in the udder but rather live in the environment where they are spread in faeces. Infection occurs when bacteria enter the teat canal, during milking if hygiene is poor and teat ends are damaged from poorly maintained equipment, or more commonly after milking when teat ends do not close efficiently or sufficient standing time is not achieved. Damp and humid conditions can trigger outbreaks which is why we can see cases when cows are out at grass as well as in the winter.

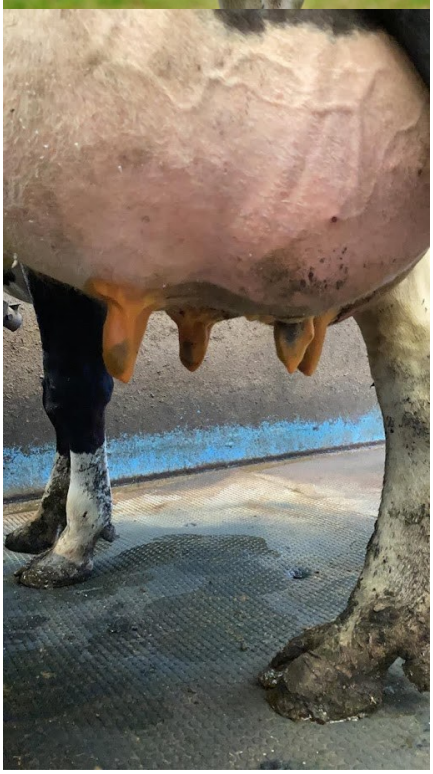
Severity of illness can vary depending on how well the cow's immune system responds to the infection. Symptoms can vary from an increase in SCC to a hard, hot quarter and watery or flakey milk. Some cases develop into toxic shock which is when we see the classic E. coli down cow caused by toxins released from the bacteria gaining access to the blood stream causing circulatory collapse and organ failure. Treatment of these cases requires urgent veterinary involvement.

Mild cases of E. coli mastitis have been shown to self-cure without the use of antibiotics – meaning milk is kept out of the tank for a shorter period of time, however we would always advocate the use of anti-inflammatories to aid recovery. More severe cases where there are noticeable changes to the quarter and milk will benefit from intra-mammary tubes. Tube selection should be based on culture and sensitivity of cases on your farm or by using a tube licensed for the treatment of E. coli mastitis – speak to one of our farm vets for advice on tube selection.

Prevention is the key to controlling E. coli outbreaks with good husbandry and cubicle hygiene the focus point:

- Maintaining good general cow health
- Reducing lameness and other illnesses that increase lying time
- Maximising health for an effective immune system – negative energy balance and ketosis can increase the susceptibility to infections
- Daily liming of beds – this can be increased to twice daily in the face of an outbreak
- Avoiding soiled and damp bedding. Good ventilation can help this
- Appropriate cubicle size and design to avoid cows soiling beds
- Regular scraping out of passageways to avoid build-up of slurry
- Avoid overcrowding
- Parlour hygiene
- Pre milking teat cleaning and dipping
- General cleanliness to avoid faecal contamination of the teat ends
- Applying an effective post milking teat dip
- Milking routine
- Avoiding excessive time standing in the collecting yard can reduce the number of cows wanting to lie down immediately after milking
- A minimum of 30 minutes standing time is recommended to allow for the teat sphincter to close and post milking teat dip to dry effectively to reduce the risk of bacterial entry to the udder
- Putting fresh feed down ready for post milking can encourage cows to stand rather than lying
- Regular parlour maintenance and teat end scoring is important to not only reduce the risk of infections, but also to maintain healthy teats and avoid injury to cows when being milked.





To discuss further, please contact the surgery and speak to one of our farm vets.

DRUG COLLECTIONS

Polite Reminder:

We require 24 hours notice for all drug collections, allowing time for prescription authorisation and preparation.

All veterinary practices are required to adhere strictly to current legislation. We may only prescribe POM-V medication for animals under our care. It is a legal requirement that before we can prescribe medication to your animal/animals, we must ensure that we have seen them, at least, within the last 12 months. If you require a repeat prescription, please telephone the office, stating the target species and intended use of the medication and giving a minimum of 24 hours notice.

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

ANNUAL SHEEP MEETING

kela *focus on health*

Date: Monday 19th January 2026

Time: 7pm to start at 7.30pm

Venue: North Ribblesdale Rugby Club, Settle.

Forte Healthcare

This year we will be discussing neonatal lamb scours, the different causes and how we can Plan, Protect and Prevent for lambing 2026.

Vetsonic® *Experts in your field*

As in previous years, extra discounts will be available on lambing list products for attendees on the night. Hotpot supper provided. Please RSVP by Monday 12th January 2026

Dalehead Veterinary Group Ltd

PRACTICAL LAMBING COURSE
WEDNESDAY 14TH JANUARY

Use the lambing simulator, practice injections, stomach tubing, and castrating all while having vets on hand to ask questions. We will cover the lambing process from care of the ewe, the lambing process, colostrum management and looking after newborn lambs.

Please contact the surgery if you would like to join us.

£30 plus VAT.

PRODUCT NEWS

PRE-LAMBING CLOSTRIDIAL BOOSTERS

Pre-lambing boosters should be administered approximately four weeks pre-lambing to ensure maximum protective antibodies in the ewe's colostrum.

We do not anticipate any supply issues with straight clostridial vaccine supply (e.g. Bravoxin, Covexin 10) but there are ongoing availability issues with combined clostridial/pneumonia vaccine (Heptavac-P).

We are taking orders for Heptavac-P and placing clients on the list on a first come first served basis.

To place your order please contact the surgery.