



LUNGWORM

INTRODUCTION

Lungworm or 'Husk' is a disease seen in the summer months in young cattle out at grass, however more recently there have been reports in adult cattle. It is caused by the worm *Dictyocaulus viviparus*.

Calves become infected by eating grass or feed contaminated with lungworm larvae. Larvae move from the calves gut to their lungs. In the lungs the larvae mature into adult worms and it is here where they lay their eggs. The eggs hatch into larvae which are then coughed up by the calves and swallowed. The larvae then pass out of the calves in their muck and onto the pasture to continue the cycle.



The lungworm cause damage while in the lungs. Mild cases will have an increased breathing rate and a mild cough when rounded up or moved. Severe cases have difficulty in breathing, may stop eating and may die. Ill thrift and weight loss are common. If the lungworm is left untreated, the cattle will develop a chronic pneumonia.

DIAGNOSIS

A diagnosis can often be made on clinical signs and history alone (e.g. stock haven't been wormed recently), but faecal samples or secretions from the lungs can be tested to look for larvae. Blood tests can also be useful. Typically cattle cough and may stand with their neck extended.

TREATMENT

In cases of lungworm, most wormers for gut worms will also kill lungworm, but severe cases may also need antibiotics to clear up secondary bacterial infections in the lungs. If a few animals in a group are showing signs of lungworm (coughing when moved) it is essential to treat the whole group with wormer.



VACCINATION

The best protection against lungworm is through vaccination with Huskvac. Huskvac is given to calves down the throat. It contains irradiated live lungworm larvae which stimulate the calves immunity, so that they are ready to fight off any subsequent lungworm infections. Huskvac needs to be given as 2 doses, 4 weeks apart and calves are protected 2 weeks after the 2nd dose. (Huskvac vaccination should start 6 weeks before turnout)

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN VACCINATING CALVES:

1. Vaccination must not be given to calves showing signs of lung damage.
2. All calves in a herd must be vaccinated
3. Although animals are vaccinated a small number of lungworm larvae will still be shed onto the pasture and if unvaccinated animals are introduced, the lungworm population can rapidly multiply.

REGULAR WORMING OR BOLUSES

The other option to control lungworm is to regularly worm stock or to give them a bolus at the start of the grazing season. The disadvantage is that wormers can kill all the worms, so the stock do not develop a natural immunity to the lungworm. When regular worming stops (e.g. in the following grazing season) the cattle will then be very susceptible to lungworm again. This is when we might see outbreaks of lungworm in adult stock. Relying on worming when you see signs of disease may result in losses before the treatment is given.



Bovilis® Huskvac

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KEY POINTS

- Increased breathing rate and coughing
- Severe cases may stand with their head and neck extended
- Coughing most obvious when cattle moved or stressed
- Mostly younger cattle in first grazing season
- Reduced live weight gains
- Mainly in summer months, but can be seen all year if there is a mild winter
- Huskvac provides the best protection against lungworm
- Youngstock given boluses may get lungworm the following grazing season