

Lungworm – Are they having a party on your pasture?

Worms are part of livestock production, whether we like it or not. Nevertheless, there are things we can all do to prevent a greater impact on production. Getting to know your pastures, rotating them, having regular faecal egg counts is a very good start to make sure you don't overuse wormers and that you use the appropriate product for your situation.

The faecal egg counts allow us to recommend a product, to target the worms found and thus slow down the build-up of resistance. These can also be used to check if the treatment you did previously actually cleared the worms or not.

In regards to lungworm, the lifecycle is quite short and takes up to 10 days to be complete, therefore large numbers can develop in a short period of time, hence the importance of being on top of it. The larvae develop in the dung and then travel to the grass by their own movement or by a fungus existing in the pasture; these are then eaten and then they migrate to the lungs where they lay eggs that are coughed up and swallowed. Outbreaks are unpredictable, but normally happen when the weather is wet and warm and can cause severe losses.

Lungworm can be diagnosed by looking for larvae in the faeces (under a microscope), antibody testing the blood (although this will only show that the animals were exposed to lungworm at some point, rather than a precise time frame), and the bulk milk can also be tested to give you an idea of exposure of the herd (again, just an idea of exposure).

The best way to prevent lungworm is by building immunity and that can be achieved by vaccination. If you're vaccinating, you should be careful when you treat the animals for gut worms as some wormers can kill the vaccine larvae, making it pointless.

Animals should also be able to build immunity through exposure to worms (lungworm and gut worms), during grazing time. However, naïve animals grazing for the first time are more susceptible to worms; if you choose to worm these animals, you should be careful not to overdo it as they need a certain level of exposure in order to have immunity.

In summary, it might be a good idea to consider vaccinating these young animals grazing for the first time as well as animals with previous history of lungworm outbreaks.

Need further help?

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.
Call the practice on **01566 772371** or **visit us online**.