

Coccidiosis in cattle

Coccidiosis in calves: is it costing you money?

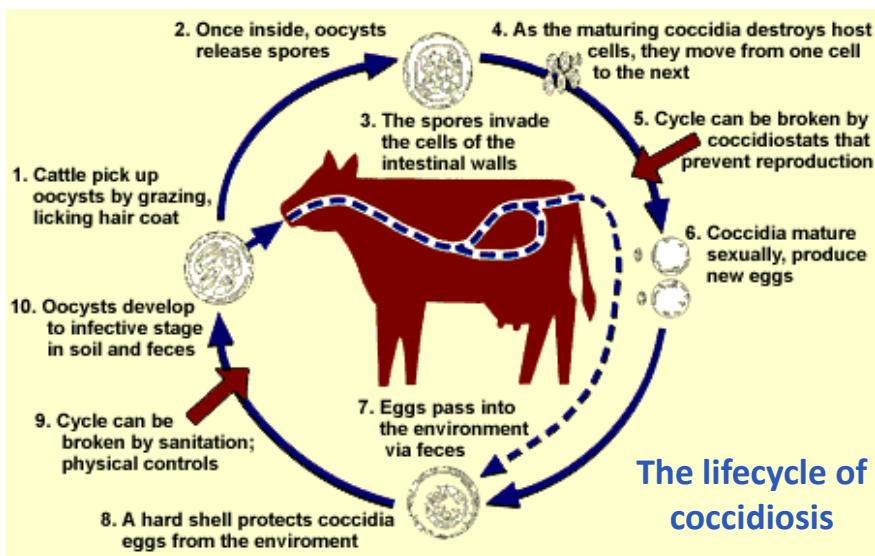
Coccidiosis is a parasite infection of the gut, usually seen in calves or lambs at between three weeks and six months of age.

Signs of coccidiosis in a calf

- Diarrhoea, sometimes with blood/clots and mucus
- Dull depressed calf with poor appetite
- Straining, sometimes high temperature
- Nervous signs (this is quite rare)
- Coccidia eggs present in faecal sample

Signs of lower level of infection in a group

- Ill-thrift and decreased growth rates
- Dull coat, slightly dry nose
- Mild diarrhoea, sometimes comes and goes
- Calves may appear less lively
- Signs may be very difficult to pick up



Clues that coccidiosis may be a problem

- Poor environmental hygiene, either indoors or at pasture
- Dirty water troughs and feed buckets
- Lack of dry bedding
- Low volume of bedding in creep area

Treatment of clinical cases

- Coccidiostats (e.g. Vecoxan, Baycox)
- Nursing and fluid therapy (e.g. oral LifeAid)
- More intensive measures in severe cases (under vet supervision)

Prevention

- Address the environmental signs outlined above
- Ensure thorough cleaning of pens between batches of calves
- Avoid overcrowding and stress
- Avoid mixing age groups
- Ensure good ventilation and drainage, with no draughts or driving rain
- Preventative treatment of all calves in each group 2 weeks after challenge (eg moving into new building)

Why bother with prevention?

- Most economic loss comes from calves with no clinical signs ("subclinical" cases)
- Once clinical signs are seen the gut is already damaged
- Even sub-clinical infections will cause significant gut damage
- Gut damage decreases the calf's ability to absorb nutrients, and can therefore decrease growth rates by up to 20%

So....Prevention is better than cure!

