


# Cattle: Preparing for housing

As the housing season approaches, now is a great time to think about managing stock to prevent problems over the winter. Some of the important things to think about are discussed below:

## Parasite control

- **Gut worms** picked up over the late summer can produce larvae which become dormant in the lining of the gut
  - In spring, these can re-emerge in large numbers and cause major problems
  - It can be difficult to avoid cattle picking up some worms at this time of year, so a “housing dose” of wormer is commonly used to get rid of these larvae and prevent disease later on
  - This can also help make sure that cattle are clear of lungworm as they come in
  - Not all wormers work against larvae, so choice of wormer is important
  - Gut and lungworms are less of an issue in adult cattle, which normally have sufficient immunity to prevent these larvae surviving in significant numbers
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- **Liver fluke** is another important problem to bear in mind: infection often occurs in late summer/autumn
  - Signs can either result from immature fluke migrating through the liver causing acute signs in autumn/early winter (although this is much more common in sheep) or from the presence of mature fluke in the liver in late winter/spring
  - The latter is commoner in cattle and typically causes ill thrift, weight loss, poor milk yield and growth rates
  - We can check for exposure to fluke with using blood (or bulk milk) testing at this time of year (fluke will usually be too young to be producing eggs, which is the other way to diagnose a problem)
  - Treating cattle around housing can be a useful way to prevent problems, although an alternative approach will need to be considered for dairy herds (because of withdrawal periods). Again, not all drugs treat immature fluke

## Other things to consider

- Digital dermatitis control (mainly important in dairy herds): treatment with an appropriate footbathing regime at housing may reduce incidence over the winter. Discuss with your vet if you would like to consider this option
- How well do you know your silage? Analysing forage is a really important part of rationing over the winter months. Don't forget quality may vary through the clamp
- Housing: cow comfort and ventilation can be key to preventing winter problems (see separate factsheets for details)

**Any of the team will be pleased to help with worming/fluke treatment advice.**