

Factsheet



Lungworm

The parasite

Lungworm disease in cattle (also called husk) is caused by an internal roundworm called *Dictyocaulus viviparus*.

Larvae are picked up from grazing, moving from the gut to the lungs, where adult worms lay eggs to be passed into the faeces after hatching into larvae.

This cycle takes 3 -4 weeks.

The disease

Lungworm is seen in all parts of the UK from June to November when temperatures and rainfall increase the larvae's survival on pasture.

Symptoms

Clinical signs (in late summer) include:

- weight loss
- coughing
- increased breathing rate
- reduced milk production
- death

Diagnosis

Lungworm can be confirmed by your vet or your abattoir by:

- ELISA blood test
- Faecal egg/larvae counts
- post-mortem examination of lungs

Your livestock management plan

Once diagnosed, you will need to update your [livestock management plan](#) to describe:

a) your steps to prevent the build-up of the parasite (without becoming over-reliant on anthelmintics), including:

- vaccination

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Date Produced: Feb 2021

- building immunity during the grazing season (gradual and continual contact with larvae on grass)
- optimum stocking rates
- grazing systems (clean/rotational/mixed)
- moving stock (see below)
- buying stock (see below)

b) what conditions would lead you to treat individuals or groups and with what named products

Management approaches to avoid

These are some examples of where the build-up of immunity falls down, and why an increase in lungworm has been seen, even in older cattle:

- a lack of vaccination before first grazing
- housing during first grazing season and lack of vaccination before second grazing season
- worming too close to vaccination (inactivates the vaccine)
- intensively worming throughout the summer including some wormer boluses
- buying in cattle (of any age) from farms with no or very little lungworm exposure and turning onto pasture with larvae
- bringing in animals reared away on pasture with no or very little lungworm and turning onto pasture with larvae
- very high number of larvae on the pasture.

Further resources on prevention of lungworm:

- <https://www.farmhealthonline.com/disease-management/cattle-diseases/dictyocaulus-viviparus/>
- <https://www.nadis.org.uk/disease-a-z/cattle/pge-lungworm-in-cattle/>
- <https://www.nadis.org.uk/webinars/preventing-lungworm-in-cattle/>