



Strategies for Deworming

By Heather Smith Thomas

Internal parasites reduce growth and weight gains in young cattle and hinder optimum production in all classes of cattle. Heavy worm infestations are a stress, making the host animal more vulnerable to disease. Deworming at proper time in the life cycle of the parasite to minimize re-contamination of pasture with worm larvae can keep re-infection at a low level.

Time of Year

The best time to treat cattle depends on climate, says Thomas Craig, DVM, PhD (Professor of Pathobiology at Texas A&M). "Here in Texas, worms thrive on pastures in winter because it's cool and moist but not cold, whereas in northern parts of the U.S. worms are dormant during winter. Most days, our winter temperature gets up to 50 degrees. What worms can't stand is 90 degrees; they go dormant during summer. So that's the best time for us to deworm — when it's hot and dry.

"In the north, winter is the time to deworm," he says. You can slow transmission of worms if you hit them when they're dormant (with a product that affects encysted stages), killing those that would start laying eggs when weather conditions improve.

Patricia Scharko, DVM (Extension ruminant veterinarian, University of Kentucky) says the best time to deworm in Kentucky is late June/early July. "Worms don't survive when it's dry, and since 90% of the worm population is in the pasture rather than in the cattle, this is when to take advantage of that," she says.

Since calves are most adversely affected, it often pays to do fecal egg counts. "Egg counts may vary with time of year and individual animals, but if it's 500 or more eggs per gram, calves need to be dewormed," says Scharko. Work with your veterinarian to determine the extent of

parasite load and use an appropriate deworming program.

Craig says it usually pays to deworm calves. "Even though they're doing well because they're on milk and good feed, they generally have worms. Most of our studies indicate that if we treat calves above 200 pounds or 2 months of age, they gain more by weaning time than untreated calves, even though untreated animals may not show clinical signs of worms. It makes a difference that more than pays for cost of the drug," he says, especially if cattle are on irrigated pastures rather than dry rangeland. Range cattle won't pick up many worms because stocking rate is low and worms don't survive in dry conditions.

Choosing a Product

In many regions, stockmen are advised to treat in summer and again in late fall with a product that also provides lice/grub control. There are a number of good products available but they don't all work the same way and some are more effective for different worms and in different situations.

There are three classes of deworming drugs — benzimidazoles (white oral pastes), levamisol, and the newer macrolides (ivermectin, moxidectin). "The macrolides are endectocides (effective against both internal and external parasites) and retain a high blood level for a period of time so incoming worms are also killed," explains Craig.

Oral products are effective for short-term deworming, killing adult worms in the gut. "These include Panacur/Safeguard, Valbazon, Benzelmin, etc.," says Scharko. Pour-ons and injectables tend to be longer acting, killing larval stages anywhere in the body. These include Ivomec, Ivomec Plus, Dectomax, Cydectin and generic products.

Continued on Page 14

When to deworm?
SPRING (strategic) Deworming

Deworm 4 weeks after start grazing. OPTIONS:

1. **Long action** (Ivomec, Cydectin, Dectomax, Eprinex)
 - 2 treatments: 6 weeks apart
2. **Short action**
 - 3 treatments: 3 weeks apart

❖ **Stockers - deworm every 90 days**

