

May 2026

Coccidiosis in Calves and Lambs

Coccidiosis is the third most common type of calf scour and probably the most common cause of scour at 6 to 8 weeks old. It rarely affects calves under 4 weeks. Coccidiosis generally has a high morbidity (sickness) but low mortality (deaths), in some outbreaks it can be very serious with deaths and very sick calves.

Characteristics of Coccidia:

- Have a hard exterior coating
- Resistant to most environmental conditions.
- Can survive in environment for months ...even years!
- Resistant to most standard disinfectants
- Not infective until conditions are right....moisture/warmth and oxygen.

warmth and oxygen.

Orange line denotes Diarrhoea.
Red line denotes oocyst shedding.
Star denotes when infection is evident

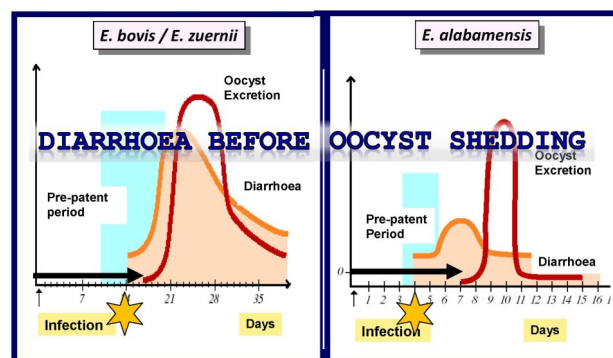
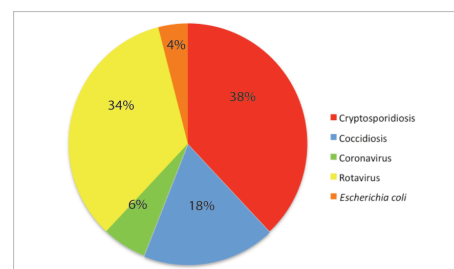
It can be seen from the graphs above that diarrhoea can occur before we can detect oocysts in the faeces especially with *E. alabamensis*. This means it can be difficult to be sure it is coccidia affecting the animals in the early period. We now know there are 3 common types of coccidiosis in the UK, a calf must contact each type to be immune to it, this means that a calf could take one type, *E. bovis*, in the house, recover, but take a different *E. alabamensis*, in the field. This explains some of the recurrent cases of coccidiosis we have seen on our farms.

Common signs include:

- Scruffy coat, lack of appetite, poor weight gain/FCE
- Chronic performance setback, a batch of calves just “stand still” and don’t thrive for weeks or months.
- Increased susceptibility to secondary infections, eg pneumonia
- Heifers take approximately 1 month longer to reach target weight for service and may show poorer fertility.
- Financial losses may not be obvious if the problem is long standing but can be significant when feed costs etc are considered.

Coccidiosis is a complex problem, many times it is put down to a “meal scour” in the young calves. It is relatively easy to test for using batch faeces sampling (multiple calf samples in one pot). There are also some very effective treatments available including drenches like Vecoxan or Baycox or incorporating Deccox into calf meal.

Most infections are sub-clinical $\geq 95\%$ and do no harm. There may be no obvious clinical signs in calves, but in time we see clues e.g. uneven weights in batches, scruffy coat and ill thrift. For more advice about your farm contact a Parklands vet.



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Fly Strike

We don't usually worry about fly strike in sheep until later in the year, however it is as early as April and May that the first cases are seen and there were quite a number last year in May. It has been shown that it is this early build up which produces the flies for later in the year.

EARLY TREATMENT IS BEST - The conditions that flies need to develop often occur now in early spring. Blowfly larvae need temperatures above 10°C to develop. This first 'fly wave' causes spring strike and in many areas it can occur as early as April. Flies of the 'first wave' deposit thousands of eggs onto affected sheep. These hatch into larvae which then emerge as blowfly to form the second 'fly wave'.

TREATMENT METHODS There are two main types of product that can be used to control blowfly strike. Insecticides such as organophosphate (OP) dips and synthetic pyrethroid (SP) pour-ons. Insect growth regulators (IGRs) offer a popular solution with a long duration of protection. A recent survey revealed more farmers in the UK choose IGRs than any other type of blowfly prevention, for example CLiK which offers an unrivalled 16 week protection, or as the new formulation CLiKZiN, which offers 8 weeks cover.

LAMBS – TREAT YOUNG FOR TIME AND COST SAVINGS Younger lambs need smaller doses so in the early season CLiK can be very cost effective. One treatment applied early takes lambs through to market; no need to worry about strike or retreating. If protection is required for fast growing lambs that will be marketed in less than 8 weeks, Clikzin has a 7 day meat withhold.

TREATMENT OF FLY STRIKE Treatment must be prompt to minimise the discomfort caused and to prevent productivity losses and death. IGR's cannot be used as a treatment, they will prevent but NOT kill maggots. In cases of strike, use an SP pour-on, such as (Crovect). For advice please speak to a Parklands vet.

Bluetongue Update

We are glad to see a lot of farmers protecting their livestock with the available vaccines. We would like to remind farmers that there is no longer a requirement to apply to DAERA for a licence, or to record and report all numbers of stock vaccinated to DAERA once vaccinated. We would urge farmers to vaccinate as soon as possible as it will soon be the warmer time of year when the virus spreads faster, and the vaccine in cattle is a 2 shot course which means full protection could take about 6 weeks to develop. For any queries please speak to a Parklands Vet.

Turnout Vaccines

Don't forget to give all cattle who have had their first shot of **clostridial vaccine** their second one. Giving one shot of vaccine only effectively prevents disease for about 6 weeks whereas the second protects them for the full year. If they have had 2 shots previously then a single booster only is required.

Botulism is still a deadly risk, so don't forget to use the vaccine ideally before turnout.

Pneumonia is seen at this time of year especially in the young calves and lambs. For lambs we find heptavac P is effective at reducing pneumonia. For calves there are common vaccines we use but this can be specific to each farms farming enterprise, speak to a Parklands vets for more information.

Have the cows had their **fertility vaccines** ahead of breeding? BVD and Lepto are still common. We also see a lot of IBR and Salmonella all of which can cause abortions. Again Speak to a Parklands vet for the best protocol for your farm.