



A NEWSLETTER OF DAKOTALAND FEEDS

## Parasites Still Suck

If you have noticed loose stools in your yard as you have been feeding the calves the last several weeks, this may stem from several reasons, including (but not limited to) the fluctuating weather and overeating. However, one reason that might not come to mind is worms or parasites. We don't often think of them, and it is easy to forget that they could be a problem.

In a 2009 report from Dr. John Lawrence at Iowa State University, deworming was by far the best return on investment of any technology available to beef producers. The benefit of dewormers was the greatest for the cow/calf and stocker sectors and was second only to implants for the feedlot sector. This report calculated the value of dewormers at just over \$200 per head for the cow/calf sector in 2007 (when calf prices were a lot lower.)

The tremendous value of dewormers is the result of the increased absorption of nutrients possible when worms aren't damaging the gut of the cattle. The damage that these parasites do to the gut not only decreases nutrient absorption, but also can reduce the ability of the immune system to function properly. The animal is then at an increased risk of respiratory disease, digestive upset, reproductive failure, or other general health problems. In some very rare cases, cattle can become so parasitized that it can cause death. While death is not a common occurrence, all of the collateral damage to the gut and immune systems is what hurts us the most as cattle producers.

Worms and parasites are a growing concern for a number of reasons. First and foremost is the fact that these parasites seem to be building resistance to many of our traditional dewormers that have been highly effective in the past. This is a major problem in the southern states, where worms do not go into the ground for a wintering period. The lifecycle of worms is dependent on having a host animal. Grazing cattle pick up worms that are on the forage they consume. The worm sets up shop in the gut, replicates, and eggs are deposited with manure. As they mature, they find a new blade of grass that the cattle consume to start the cycle again. When we have a significant period of time without exposure to new worms, that can help us control them more easily and give our cattle a break from constant exposure.

Strategic deworming is the concept of deworming at times that are the most appropriate. In our region, that means using a dewormer after removing cattle from pastures, which typically means at weaning time for calves or taking the cows home to drylot for the winter. The cattle will not be re-exposed to worms in these feeding situations, and getting rid of the worms in the gut will be most beneficial as early in the feeding period as possible to allow for the best absorption of nutrients. There has been talk in the industry about adopting a practice of refugia, which is similar to your refuge acres in corn production. We might leave a small percentage of cows untreated so the worms that are deposited on your pasture areas are less likely to be resistant to the compounds we treat them with. It has been suggested that you leave a couple of your healthiest and heaviest cows to serve as the refugia. This is not a widely accepted practice yet, so talking to your vet before trying it is recommended. This does not work for lice treatment.

Many products are available to use for deworming, and most are still very effective. You should be aware that most products have a 'blind spot' or a specific worm or life stage that they don't cover. Because of this, a combination of products can often be the best option for deworming your calves.

### In a Nutshell:

- **Worms can cause loose stools in calves**
- **Dewormers yield a high return on investment**
- **Worms decrease nutrient absorption in the gut**
- **Resistance to dewormers is a growing concern**
- **Cattle not on pasture are not exposed to worms**
- **Most dewormers do not kill every kind or stage of worm**
- **Lice products need to be topically applied**

The mode of delivery is also something to consider. Applying a pour-on when it is -10F out is not going to be the most effective way to deworm cattle that day. An injectable in that scenario would be preferred. Drench products will kill a different type of worm that the injectables are generally not as effective at getting, but the drench doesn't get all of the worms that an injectable can either. If you can't get them run through the working facilities, you have a feed option with SAFE-GUARD. If you are looking for lice control, you need to use a pour-on product because the lice do not get adequate exposure to blood for the injectable to be effective. More and more, specific lice products seem to do the best job taking care of the itching and rubbing associated with lice infestations.

The return on dewormers is highest we have available to us as cattle producers. When you choose to deworm and what product you use can vary widely, but will still have the same impact—reducing your cost of gain and improving overall herd health. Having a healthy gut is worth the effort and pays dividends.

*Roxanne Knock, PhD*

### ***What do you need to be thinking about this time of year?***

- Remember to HEAT TAPE lines on liquid systems. This keeps the line fluid.
- Be prepared for calving. Get chains, OB sleeves, lube, and calf puller in place and have colostrum replacement on hand.
- Consider ramping up your mineral program for cows prior to calving. Ask about Ultimate Breeder 8.
- Get Stress tubs for the first and second calf heifers before calving.
- Feed Rumensin to the cows to improve feed efficiency and to limit environmental coccidiosis prior to calving.
- Check with your Livestock Production Specialist to see if your ration is meeting the calves' needs.
- Check your water source and make sure it is not freezing up. Poor water intake can limit performance.
- Inventory your projected feed resources and project your winter feed needs so you can plan accordingly.

**TO RECEIVE THIS VIA EMAIL, PLEASE SEND REQUEST TO: [ROXANNE@DAKOTALANDFEEDS.COM](mailto:ROXANNE@DAKOTALANDFEEDS.COM)**



674 W Park Ave  
Huron, SD 57350