

WORM DRENCHING CALVES

One of the most common causes of poor performing calves is parasitism. There are now a myriad of drench options available to farmers, with a corresponding variation in price. To complicate matters there are increasing reports of resistance to drenches in cattle. Therefore it is important to ensure that whatever product you choose, it is going to do the job you want it to, and that you use it correctly.

The most important points when choosing a drench are;

- What are the active ingredient/s
- What is the drenching interval (number of times you will have to treat them)
- How is the drench administered (e.g. oral/injection/pour-on)
- How heavy are the animals (doses per pack)

“White” drenches are still effective on most properties and are a good choice for young calves. Oral drenching is relatively easy, they often contain minerals that help maintain growth rates, and there is a wide safety margin, so overdosing of the later calves is less likely. The only drawback is that calves will need treatment every 21 days.

The Ivermectin family of drenches (mainly pour-ons and injections) treat a broader range of parasites and have more persistence than the white drenches, meaning that drenching intervals are longer (4-8 weeks), and external parasites are also controlled. In young calves (<150 kg) we would recommend an injection over a pour on as pour-on products can be inactivated by dust, dirt and calf-dung. It is also more important to get dose rates right for Ivermectins as toxicity can occur.

Drench families should be rotated every 12mths to minimise the risk of resistance developing on your property. Last season we saw some significant improvements in growth rates of young stock on certain properties when new drench families or combinations were used for the first time.

Make sure that you have an accurate assessment of the weight of the animals to be treated, either weigh a selection of the mob, or use a weigh band, and remember to treat all animals to the heaviest weights - NOT the average weight, but avoid excessive dosing of late or smaller calves with Ivermectins. Finally, check that the drench gun is working properly and delivering the correct amount of product. It also pays to check how much drench is left at the end to ensure the right amount has been used. Under-dosing is a leading cause of resistance developing in parasites.