

## Cattle worm control – the basics

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#### Abbreviations used

AR: anthelmintic resistance

ML: macrocyclic lactones

BZ: benzimidazole

LEV: levamisole

IVM: ivermectin

EPI: eprinomectin

This Primefact outlines the basics of worm control for grazing beef cattle in New South Wales. The same general principles apply to dairy cattle, although the details may vary and, in addition, milk withholding periods of anthelmintics (especially flukicides) also need to be considered. The importance of various cattle worms in different climatic zones is summarised in Table 1.

A brief outline follows.

#### Round Worms (Nematodes)

**Gastrointestinal.** The small brown stomach worm (*Ostertagia ostertagi*) is the most important roundworm of cattle in temperate regions worldwide, including NSW. Other gastrointestinal worm species, however, including *Haemonchus placei*, *Cooperia* spp., *Trichostrongylus* spp., *Oesophagostomum* and *Bunostomum* (hookworm) add to the total impact on host animals.

**Lungworms.** Cattle can be infected with lungworms (*Dictyocaulus viviparus*), but these parasites are usually not a problem in NSW.

#### Flukes (Trematodes)

**Liver fluke** (*Fasciola hepatica*) is an important parasite of cattle in certain areas (where conditions are suitable for the intermediate host, an aquatic snail). 'Fluky' areas occur mainly in the eastern third of NSW, but also in some western irrigation areas.

**Stomach fluke** (such as *Paramphistomum* spp. or *Calicophoron* spp.) occasionally cause disease, mainly in coastal areas. Adult stomach flukes do little damage; most problems are caused by large numbers of migrating immature flukes in the small intestine.

Table 1. Harmful cattle worms and their distribution (Source: Love & Hutchinson 2003, adapted from Cole 1986)

#### Common / significant

##### Summer rainfall areas of NSW

*Haemonchus placei*

*Ostertagia ostertagi* (Small brown stomach worm)

*Cooperia punctata* – *C. pectinata* (Intestinal worm), as a complex, often with *Ostertagia* and *Bunostomum phlebotomum* (Hookworm)

*Oesophagostomum radiatum* (Nodular worm)

##### Non-seasonal to winter rainfall areas

*Ostertagia ostertagi*

*Trichostrongylus axei* (Stomach hair worm)

*Cooperia oncophora*

##### Occasionally significant, mainly subclinical, or sometimes present in large numbers

*Fasciola hepatica* (Liver fluke)

*Paramphistomum* spp. (Stomach fluke)

*Calicophoron calicophorum* (Stomach fluke)

*Strongyloides* spp. (Threadworm)



## Integrated parasite management (IPM)

Producers should manage worms by using 'non-chemical' as well as 'chemical' control options. 'Non-chemical' options include improved nutrition and providing 'worm-safe' pastures for young cattle. Strategies include the following.

### Immunity and nutrition

Well-fed animals develop immunity faster and are better able to expel parasites and to withstand the effects of those that remain.

Young cattle are most susceptible to worms, but usually develop useful immunity by around 20–24 months. In general, cattle develop better immunity to worms than sheep and goats. Although adult cattle often require little or no drenching for roundworms (as opposed to liver fluke), some animals can become wormy. Susceptible animals may include bulls, first-calf heifers, and severely-stressed individuals.

### Pasture/grazing management

Dung pats can provide shelter for worm larvae for several months, even in very dry conditions. Therefore, paddocks continually grazed by young cattle in autumn and winter can become very wormy.

It is important to prepare a number of 'worm-safe' pastures, particularly in higher-rainfall areas of NSW. This is so young, susceptible cattle can be moved every few months to paddocks with fewer worm larvae. Aim to graze weaners from early August through to summer on the least contaminated pastures available.

Begin preparing 'low-worm' pastures for spring four months ahead (i.e. in April). The table below shows different low-worm pastures.

Best	New sown pasture or crop.
	Pasture grazed by sheep for previous 4 months.
	Pasture <i>not</i> grazed by any cattle for previous 4 months.
Good	Pasture grazed by adult dry cattle or cattle older than 18 months of age.
High-risk	Pasture grazed by young cattle such as weaners.

### Drenching

For the timing and frequency of drenching, see the section on 'Putting it all together'.

#### Roundworms

Anthelmintic treatments may be necessary to control round worms in young cattle, particularly in higher-rainfall areas (the Coast and Tablelands). In low-rainfall areas of western NSW, drenching of

cattle of any age is rarely required. (If in doubt, check young cattle using a worm egg count.)

For most of NSW, regular treatment of adult cattle is not required.

#### Fluke

On liver fluke-affected farms, treatment of all cattle with a flukicide will be required one or more times a year, depending on the severity of the problem. The most important liver fluke treatment is usually in late autumn (April/May) when both immature and adult flukes are present. Some flukicides are only effective against adults. Consider rotating from one flukicide type to another in order to slow the development of resistance. Warning: flukicides containing triclabendazole must not be used in lactating dairy cattle.

Stomach fluke can affect cattle under certain conditions, particularly in coastal areas.

For more information on stomach and liver fluke, see the relevant Primefacts on the NSW DPI website at [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/primefacts](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/primefacts).

### Drench types

See Table 3

### Drench resistance

In an earlier worldwide review of AR in cattle worms, Hutchinson (2003) states that: 'although evidence of resistance in cattle worms is only slowly coming to light and has so far been restricted to the less-pathogenic species of *T. axei* and *Cooperia*, it should be expected that resistance to MLs is likely to become established in Australia'. A more recent international review (Kaplan 2004) noted that clinical case reports basing bovine nematode resistance on treatment failures were insensitive. However, some cattle nematodes were reported to have proven resistant to BZ and ML in other parts of the world: *Haemonchus* and *Cooperia* in Argentina (Anziani et al 2004); and *Cooperia* in Europe (Coles 2002).

In New Zealand there have been reports from the early 1990s of resistance to BZs principally in *Cooperia* but also in *Ostertagia* and *Trichostrongylus* (Hosking & Watson 1991, McKenna 1996). ML resistance has been reported more recently, again principally in *Cooperia* (Vermunt et al 1996).

With growing concern over the apparent level of resistance in cattle nematodes, a major systematic survey to assess the situation in beef cattle in NZ was recently completed (reviewed by Pomeroy 2006). Based on faecal egg count reduction tests at only 7–10 days after treatment (a possible weakness in the design) it used only oral drenches

on 62 randomly selected farms in the North Island. The two types of system examined were intensive bull-beef rearing systems (hand reared bull calves or purchased as weaners 10–12 weeks old) and 'cow-calf' where calves were reared on mothers until weaning at 28–30 weeks then grown out on the same or separate finishing farms. The study was restricted to the North Island as bull-beef rearing had only recently been introduced to the South Island.

The estimated prevalence of IVM resistance in *Cooperia* was 92% and 62% for albendazole (Waghorn et al 2006). Fortunately LEV was still effective against these resistant strains of *Cooperia*. However, it is normally poorly effective against inhibited *Ostertagia*.

*Ostertagia* in cattle had albendazole resistance with a prevalence of 35% but only 9% of farms had IVM or LEV resistance in this species.

Risk factors for anthelmintic resistance were examined in a concurrent interview and questionnaire of farmers' opinions and practices regarding AR on these same farms (Jackson et al 2006). This revealed that the median number of treatments was five. One in four farms used anthelmintics on calves on 8–12 occasions in their first year of life (a much higher frequency than would ever be considered in Australian conditions). Most anthelmintics used for the past five years were ML or their combinations, rather than BZ, LEV or BZ/LEV combinations (Jackson et al 2006).

Why there is ML resistance in *Cooperia* but not in *Ostertagia* in mixed infections when MLs are the main drenches used is not explained. Most farmers, although aware of AR, did not perceive it to be a major problem in cattle. It was concluded that all cattle farms should now be using combinations on most occasions to achieve effective control of all parasites.

Another study (Mason and McKay 2006) investigated the efficacies of pour-on anthelmintics on five New Zealand farms with suspected resistance. The study was against field strains of parasitic nematodes in young cattle. Resistance to IVM and EPI was confirmed in *C. oncophora* on all farms. There was limited emergence of *Ostertagia* resistant to IVM, but not EPI; in other (short-tailed) *Cooperia* species there was resistance to both IVM and EPI; and in *Trichostrongylus* there was resistance to IVM, EPI and LEV used separately. It was concluded that simultaneous administration of LEV and IVM pour-on is likely to control both ML-resistant *C. oncophora* and stages of *Ostertagia* that are not controlled by LEV.

On a positive note, there have been no case reports of clinical parasitism in cattle in NZ where the effect of resistant nematodes has been quantified (Jackson et al 2006).

Australia has had only two confirmed cases of drench resistance in cattle – both involving BZ ('white') drenches. One case involved oxfendazole-resistant *Trichostrongylus axei* (stomach hair worm) in western Victorian cattle (Eagleson and Bowie 1986). The other was for oxfendazole and febantel-resistant *T axei* in the New England region of NSW (Eagleson et al. 1992).

Some factors which may increase the selection of resistant worms include:

- increased exposure of the worm population to anthelmintics (through frequent drenching);
- exposure of worms to sub-lethal doses of anthelmintics (through under-dosing);
- drenching unnecessarily in dry seasons or dry environments when there are very few worm larvae on pasture. (Note, however, that cattle worm larvae can survive for some time in the protected conditions of a dried dung pat, unlike in sheep faecal pellets).

In many areas of NSW, especially drier areas, cattle are drenched too often, particularly adult cattle. (Seek local expert advice on how much drenching is required). Also, unlike the situation in sheep, the three main broad-spectrum families – BZs, LEV and ML drenches – are still effective on the majority of cattle properties. However, many producers use just one family of drenches – rarely, if ever, rotating.

### Quarantine drenching

When introducing cattle from other properties, consider 'cleaning them out' with a 'quarantine' drench, at least for roundworms, and possibly also for liver fluke.

Currently, the need for a 'quarantine' drench in cattle is somewhat less than in sheep. Anthelmintic resistance is much less common in cattle worms, so the risk of importing resistant worms is less. Also, cattle, especially adult cattle, tend to have far fewer problems with worms than sheep.

### Fine tuning

In consultation with your adviser, fine-tune an integrated parasite management program to suit your property. Use WormTest (worm egg counts) to monitor your worm control program.

Cattle (especially adult cattle) can be drenched too often. WormTest can help with decisions about drenching; however, faecal worm egg counts can be an unreliable indicator of actual worm burdens in cattle – especially cattle older than 9–12 months.

In yearling or adult cattle that appear to be wormy but have low worm egg counts, consider a 'diagnostic drench', that is, drenching a small

number of cattle in the mob and monitoring the response to treatment. Clinical disease or reduced performance can sometimes be present when egg counts are very low.

### Putting it all together

Table 2 (below) gives an example of a cattle worm control program. Remember that cattle in many areas of NSW will require fewer treatments than are included here.

#### Always read the label

Users of agricultural (or veterinary) chemical products must always read the label, and any permit, before using the product, and strictly comply with the directions on the label and the conditions of any permit. Users are not absolved from compliance with the directions on the label or the conditions of the permit by reason of any statement made or not made in this publication.

### References and further information

See related Primefacts on the NSW Department of Primary Industries website:

[www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/primefacts](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/primefacts)

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Table 2. An example of a beef cattle worm control program (higher rainfall Tablelands area)<sup>1</sup>.

Date	Class of stock		Management	Additional treatments	
	Young (< 20 months)	Adults		Liver fluke <sup>3</sup>	Stomach fluke <sup>4</sup>
Feb	Drench for inhibited <i>Ostertagia</i> <sup>2</sup> .		Regular drenching may not be required.	+	
April/May	Drench at weaning.			Begin preparation of 'safe' + pastures for spring <sup>5</sup> .	
Early August	Drench and move to safe pasture. Move again later in spring, if possible.			+ +	

1 This is a guide only. Fewer drenches may be required in many areas. Drenching may rarely be required on the Western Plains. More drenches are generally required in high-rainfall areas with productive pastures, especially if no sheep are grazed and/or grazing management is not practised.

2 The February drench for roundworms – if required – should be highly-effective and aimed at inhibited *Ostertagia* (small brown stomach worm). MLs are most effective, followed by BZs. Levamisole has limited activity against inhibited *Ostertagia*.

3 Only treat for liver fluke if its presence is confirmed on your property. Between 1–3 fluke treatments for all ages of cattle may be necessary. The most important of these is the April treatment, followed by the August treatment, then the February treatment. Consider rotating from one flukicide to another (unrelated) flukicide. Use a highly-effective flukicide at the April treatment.

4 Stomach fluke can be a problem in certain coastal areas. Seek veterinary advice. Treatment of all cattle in these localities in August to reduce pasture contamination may be appropriate.

5 Methods of producing 'safe'; or 'low-worm' pasture include cropping, hay aftermath, and grazing beforehand with sheep or adult cattle, or cattle older than 18 months.

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (June 2007). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of New South Wales Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.

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**Table 3-Registered cattle drenches (anthelmintics)**Sources: Infopest, January 2007; Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority ([www.apvma.gov.au](http://www.apvma.gov.au))

Constituents	Product name	Company
<b>Broad-spectrum roundworm drenches – benzimidazoles ('BZ', 'white')</b>		
(Check label for efficacy and persistency of activity against different worm species)		
Albendazole (112.5 g/L)	Albendazole Cattle Mini-Drench	WSD
	Nuwhite CC	Captec
	Strategik Mini-Dose (Cattle)	Jurox
	Valbazen Mini-Dose Cattle	Pfizer
Fenbendazole (100 g/L)	Fenbendazole 100	WSD
	Fencare 100	Virbac
	Panacur 100	Intervet
Fenbendazole (25 g/L)	Fenbendazole	4Farmers
	Fenbendazole	WSD
	Fencare 25	Virbac
	Panacur 25	Intervet
Oxfendazole (100 g/L)	Worma Drench	Farnam
Oxfendazole (45.3 g/L)	Combat White Anthelmintic	Virbac
	Oxazole LV - Sheep, Cattle Goats	Jurox
	Oxfen LV	Virbac
	Systemex Oral	Coopers
Oxfendazole (75 g/L)	Alternate	Bomac/Elanco
	Bomatak Pour-On	Bomac
Oxfendazole (90.6 g/L)	Bomatak.C	Bomac/Pharm tech
	Oxazole - Cattle & Horses	Jurox
	Oxfen C	Virbac
	Parafend LV	Norbrook
	Systemex Concentrated Drench	Coopers
<b>Broad-spectrum roundworm drenches – levamisole ('LEV', 'clear')</b>		
(Check label for efficacy and persistency of activity against different worm species)		
Levamisole (base) (125 g/L)	Nilverm Pour-On	Coopers
Levamisole (base) (200 g/L)	Big-L Pour-On	Sykes
	Citarin Pour-On	Bayer
	Levamisole Pour-On	Virbac
	Levipor	Novartis
Levamisole as HCl (27 g/L)	Big L	Sykes
	Levamisole	4Farmers



Constituents	Product name	Company
	Levamisole	WSD
	Nilverm Oral Drench	Coopers
	Nulev	Captec
	Rycozole	Novartis
Levamisole as HCl (340 g/L)	Levamisole Gold Mixadrum Concentrate	Virbac
Levamisole as HCl (63.6 g/L)	Combat Clear (Oral Drench)	Virbac
	Levamisole Gold LV	Virbac
Levamisole as HCl (67.8 g/L)	Rycozole RV	Novartis
Levamisole as HCl (67.8 g/L)+Se as sod.selenate (1 g/L)	Rycozole RV Plus Selenium	Novartis
Levamisole as HCl (67.9 g/L)	Clear LV	Bayer
	Low Volume Levamisole	WSD
Levamisole as HCl (68 g/L)	Nilverm LV	Coopers
Levamisole HCl (32 g/L)	Levamisole Gold	Virbac
Levamisole HCl (80 g/L)	Nulev LV	Merial
<b>Broad-spectrum roundworm drenches – macrocyclic lactones ('MLs', 'mectins')</b>		
(Check label for efficacy and persistency of activity against different worm species)		
Abamectin (10 g/L)	Avomec	MSD Agvet
	Paramectin RV	Jurox
Abamectin (10 mg/ml)	Genesis Abamectin Pour-On	Ancare
	Genesis Injection Abamectin	Ancare
	Paramectin Injection	Dover
	Rycomectin - Cattle Injection	Novartis
	Vetmec - Cattle Injection	Youngs
	Virbamec Injection - Cattle	Virbac
Abamectin (10 mg/ml) + cyanocobalamin (2 mg/ml)	Genesis Injection Abamectin Plus Vit B12	Ancare
Abamectin (5 g/L)	Paramectin Pour-On	Jurox
Abamectin (5 mg/ml)	Beefmec Pour-On (Abamectin)	Virbac
	Virbamec Pour-On	Virbac
	Virbamec Pour-On Endectocide	Virbac
Doramectin (10 mg/ml)	Dectomax Injectable	Pfizer
Doramectin (5 mg/ml)	Dectomax Pour-On	Pfizer
Eprinomectin (5 mg/ml)	Ivomec Eprinex Pour-On	Merial
Fluazuron (15 g/L) + ivermectin (5 g/L)	Acatak Duostar Tick Development Inhibitor And Broad Spectrum Pour-On	Novartis
Ivermectin (10 mg/ml)	Bomectin (Injection)	Pharm Tech
	Dairymec - Pour-On	Virbac

Constituents	Product name	Company
	Ecomectin - Injection	Eco Animal Health
	Genesis Injection Ivermectin	Ancare
	Genesis Pour-On	Ancare
	Imax CD	Pharm Tech
	Ivomec Injection - Cattle	Merial
	Noromectin Injectable - Cattle	Norbrook
	Noromectin Injection - Cattle & Pigs	Norbrook
	Vetimec Injection	C-Corp
	Virbamax Pour-On	Virbac
	Virbamec LA Injection	Virbac
	Virbamec LV Pour-On	Virbac
Ivermectin (5 g/L)	Ivermectin Baymec Pour-On	Bayer
	Ivermectin Pour-On	Virbac
	Paramax Pour-On	Coopers
	Phoenectin (Ivermectin) Pour-On	Phoenix Scientific
Ivermectin (5 mg/ml)	Ausmectin Cattle Pour-On	IAH Sales
	Bovimectin	Norbrook
	Ecomectin Cattle Pour-On	Eco Animal Health
	Ivomec Pour-On - Cattle	Merial
	Noromectin Pour-On	Norbrook
	Vetimec Pour-On	C-Corp
Moxidectin (10 g/L)	Cydectin Injection - Cattle/Sheep	Fort Dodge
	Cydectin Injection for Cattle	Fort Dodge
Moxidectin (5 g/L)	Cydectin Pour-On	Fort Dodge
<b>Broad-spectrum (roundworms) + flukicide</b>		
(Check label for efficacy against different roundworms as well as various stages of fluke: adult, immature, and early immature)		
Abamectin (5 mg/ml) + triclabendazole (300 mg/ml)	Anfluke Pour-On	Ancare
	Fasimec Cattle Pour-On	Novartis
	Genesis Ultra Pour-On	Ancare
	Triclamec Cattle Pour-On	Youngs
Ivermectin (10 mg/ml) + clorsulon (100 mg/ml)	Genesis Ultra Injection	Ancare
	Ivomec Plus	Merial
	Noromectin Plus Broad-Spectrum Antiparasitic Injection for Cattle	Norbrook
	Vetmec F	Chemvet
Ivermectin (10 g/L) + clorsulon (100 g/L)	Virbamax Plus Injection	Virbac
	Virbamec Plus Injection	Virbac



Constituents	Product name	Company
Ivermectin (15 g/L) + triclabendazole (240 g/L)	Sovereign	Coopers
Levamisole as HCl (64 g/L) + oxcyclozanide (150 g/L)	Nilzan LV	Coopers
Triclabendazole (120 g/L) + ivermectin (2 g/L)	Fasimec Cattle	Novartis
	Triclamec Cattle	Novartis
	Triclamec Cattle	Youngs
Triclabendazole (120 g/L) + oxfendazole (45.3 g/L)	Flukazole C	Virbac
Triclabendazole (120 g/L) + oxfendazole (45.3 g/L) + Se as sod.selenate (1 g/L)	Flukazole C Plus Selenium	Virbac
<b>Flukicide</b>		
(Check label for efficacy against different stages of fluke: adult, immature, and early immature)		
Nitroxynil as eglumine (340 g/L)	Trodax	Fort Dodge
Triclabendazole (100 g/L)	Fasinex 100 Oral	Novartis
	Exifluke Oral Flukicide for Sheep, Cattle and Goats	Bomac
Triclabendazole (120 g/L)	Fasicare 120	Novartis
	Fasinex 120	Novartis
	Flukare C	Virbac
	Tremacide 120	Jurox
	Tricla 120	Youngs
Triclabendazole (120 g/L) + Se as sod.selenate (1 g/L)	Flukare C with Selenium	Virbac
Triclabendazole (240 g/L)	Fasinex 240	Novartis
Triclabendazole (50 g/L)	Fasinex 50	Novartis
	Flukare S	Virbac
	Tricla 50	Youngs
Triclabendazole (50 g/L) + Se as sod.selenate (0.5 g/L)	Flukare S with Selenium	Virbac
<b>Other</b>		
(Label claim for trichlorfon: control of bot in horses and intestinal worms in cattle. Check label for details).		
Trichlorfon (800 g/kg)	Neguvon	Bayer