

Parasite Control In Calves And Heifers

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Internal parasites can seriously affect growth and performance of calves and heifers. Calves are not born with worms but they become infected by ingesting worm eggs from manure-contaminated bedding, feed, or water. Serious worm burdens occur in most heifers during the first summer that they are on pasture. Worm eggs can overwinter on permanent pastures and can increase to high numbers by midsummer on heifer pastures. On some pastures, particularly if low and wet, lungworm infestation can seriously affect heifers.

Coccidia are protozoan parasites that can cause an intestinal infection in calves. Coccidiosis can cause a serious, bloody diarrhea, especially in calves in close confinement. Heifers eventually acquire a resistance to coccidia, but calves with heavy coccidia

infections may be stunted. In some cases coccidiosis is fatal.

Control of internal parasites in dairy replacements requires careful attention to good management practices. Young calves should be housed individually so they have no direct contact with other animals or animal manure until at least 1 week after weaning. Calves can then go into smaller groups of calves of similar age and size. Avoid exposing young calves to facilities that have manure-contamination from older cattle. Calf facilities should be maintained in a clean, well-bedded condition. Hay racks, feed bunks and waterers should be designed and maintained to minimize manure contamination.

If possible, avoid pasturing heifers on the same pasture areas every year. Clean pastures that have not been used for cattle are best; next

best for heifer pasture is land that was previously used by adult cattle.

Most herds require a routine treatment program for young stock. Worming should be started soon after calves are put into group pens. Young calves may need to be wormed as frequently as every 60 days from weaning to 8 months of age. Pastured heifers should be wormed twice during the early pasture season. For most Pennsylvania situations, worming pastured heifers in May and June is appropriate. They should also be wormed again in October.

Manure samples from each heifer group or pen can be examined by your veterinarian for presence of worm eggs or coccidia oocysts. This helps determine the need for worming. It also monitors success of your worming program.

There are several drugs avail-

able for treatment of stomach and intestinal worms. Lungworms, when present, can be treated with levamisole. Coccidia are not affected by wormers, but can be controlled by one of the several available coccidiostats.

Remember that sanitation and management factors are just as important as drugs in a calf/heifer parasite control program.

External parasites, like the internal parasites, can cause serious production losses in dairy young stock. The major external parasites of concern to Pennsylvania dairymen are lice, mange mites, stable flies, house flies, face flies, horn flies and heel flies. Any of these can be serious enough to affect growth rate and feed efficiency. Flies may be carriers of disease. Of special importance to dairy heifers is pink eye which may be spread by face flies.

Lice and mange are frequently spread from cows and older heifers to dairy replacements. Prevent direct contact between age groups and clean calf and heifer pens thoroughly before putting a new group in the pen. Lice- or mange-affected calves or heifers should be treated with an approved product. Use at least 2 treatments at 7-10 day intervals.

Fly control requires a coordinated approach involving good sanitation, manure removal and judicious use of insecticides. Talk with your veterinarian or the Extension Office about which products to use.

It's easy to neglect important heifer-care procedures or forget to do them at the proper age or time. The following calendar will help you maintain a healthy heifer program. Post it where you will see it often, to serve as a reminder.

Plant Growth Regulators

UNIVERSITY PARK, PA — For years, plant growth regulators have been known to control grass growth by suppressing stem growth and inhibiting seedhead production. Growth regulators have been used in the turfgrass industry to reduce frequency of mowing, and more recently they have shown potential for use in forage crop production.

Improving forage grass production through chemical growth regulators is one topic that will be featured at Penn State's Agronomy Field Day, June 22 at the Rock Springs Agricultural Research Center. The field day will begin at 9:30 a.m. and continue till 4 p.m.

An ideal forage grass should provide consistent yields of high-quality forage throughout the growing season. Temperate forage grasses, however, don't produce evenly throughout the season.

They produce most of their growth in the spring and become relatively unproductive during the summer.

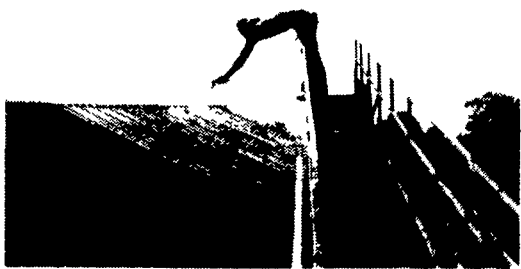
Plant growth regulators can alter the growth of temperate grasses so that they produce more evenly. Plant growth regulators, because they reduce the amount of stem and the number of seedheads, improve grass quality. Because the growth pattern is also altered, special management practices may be needed to make the best use of plant growth regulators as forage management tools.

Penn State researchers conducted a study to evaluate management strategies for the most efficient use of plant growth regulators. This study will be one of the topics discussed at Agronomy Field Day. For more information about the field day, contact Penn State agronomist Lynn Hoffman at (814) 692-7955.

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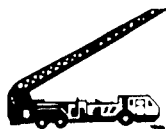
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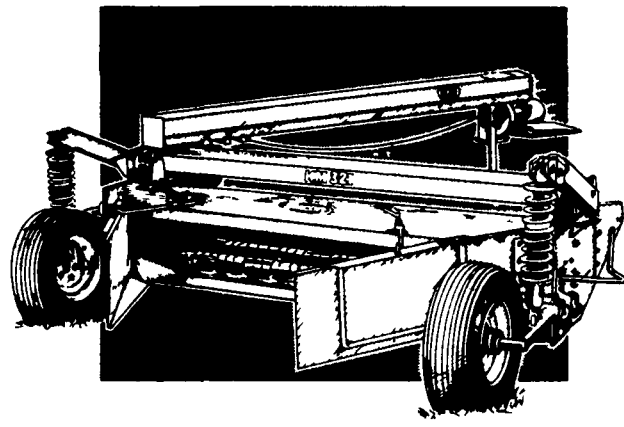
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