nantwich farm vets LTD

NOVEMBER 2026

Coccidiosis in Calves: prevention better than cure



When investigating diarrhoea in young calves, coccidiosis is an important cause to consider. This parasitic disease, caused by protozoa of the Eimeria genus, commonly affects calves from around three weeks to six months of age.

Cases are particularly common around weaning, when changes in diet, management and stress can increase the risk of disease. The parasites can persist in the environment, allowing infection pressure to build up where calves are repeatedly housed or reared.

WHAT SHOULD YOU LOOK OUT FOR?

Affected calves may develop diarrhoea, sometimes containing blood, dehydration, a poor coat and reduced growth rates. In severe cases, calves may strain when passing dung, and intestinal damage can significantly affect health and performance.

Coccidiosis doesn't always cause obvious diarrhoea. Sometimes, the first indication is a group of calves that aren't growing as expected despite adequate feeding and management. As intestinal damage may occur before clinical signs become obvious, prevention and early identification are essential.

REDUCING THE RISK ON FARM

Good calf management is central to preventing and controlling coccidiosis. Key measures include:

- Maintain good hygiene: Keep bedding clean and dry, clean pens between groups and allow areas to dry where possible.
- Avoid overcrowding: Provide adequate space to reduce contamination pressure.
- Protect feed and water: Keep troughs and drinkers clean and minimise faecal contamination.
- Manage weaning carefully: Minimise unnecessary stress and sudden management changes.

On farms with recurring problems, faecal monitoring may help guide control measures. Depending on the level of risk, targeted preventative measures may be appropriate, including anticoccidial products such as decoquinate in feed. Timing is important, as prevention should be planned around the farm's risk period. Calves already showing clinical signs may require treatment and supportive care.

Remember, not all disinfectants are effective against coccidial oocysts. Check product suitability and follow instructions for the dilution and contact time. Thorough cleaning and good management remain essential.

CONCERNED ABOUT COCCIDIOSIS? LET'S INVESTIGATE.

If you're seeing persistent scour, poor growth or unexplained setbacks, faecal testing can help establish whether coccidiosis may be contributing. Results need to be interpreted carefully. Finding oocysts doesn't automatically mean they are causing disease, as calves can shed them without clinical signs. Equally, counts may be low during early infection, even when intestinal damage is developing.

Our practice has an *Ovacyte machine*, allowing us to carry out coccidial oocyst counts alongside faecal egg counts in cattle and sheep. We also regularly access free or heavily subsidised testing schemes, potentially reducing investigation costs. We can interpret results alongside clinical signs, calf age and management history to recommend appropriate treatment and prevention.

PREVENTION TODAY, BETTER PERFORMANCE TOMORROW

Good hygiene, careful management and early investigation can help protect calf welfare, growth rates and farm productivity.

If your calves aren't thriving as expected, contact the practice to discuss testing and develop a control plan tailored to your farm.

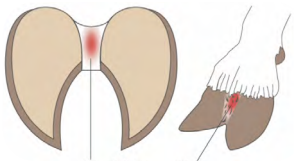
Tackling Lameness in Sheep



As the weather turns wetter, lameness often rears its head even in the best-managed sheep flocks. With scanning approaching and lambing soon underway on some farms, keeping on top of lameness is essential to maintaining flock health, welfare and performance.

Although it may seem straightforward, identifying the underlying cause of lameness is key to choosing the right treatment and achieving the best outcome. The most common causes of infectious foot disease in sheep include scald, footrot and Contagious Ovine Digital Dermatitis (CODD). While these conditions can share some similarities, recognising the differences is essential for effective treatment and control.

SCALD



Scald, also known as interdigital dermatitis, is caused by *Dichelobacter nodosus* bacteria. It causes inflammation of the skin between the claws, which may appear red, sore and moist, sometimes with smelly discharge.

Prolonged exposure to wet conditions and high stocking densities can increase the risk of scald by softening the skin between the claws and making it more susceptible to infection.

Treatment: Oxytetracycline spray (e.g. Engemycin) is appropriate for the majority of cases, with the addition of injectable antibiotics in severe or repeat occurrences.

FOOTROT

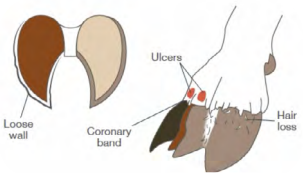
Footrot is also caused by *Dichelobacter nodosus*, but it is generally more severe than scald. Infection affects the tissues beneath the hoof horn and can cause the horn to separate from the underlying sole and hoof wall. Affected sheep often develop significant lameness, and a characteristic foul smell may be present.



Footrot is highly infectious and spreads readily within flocks, particularly where sheep share wet, muddy or contaminated areas such as gateways, troughs and housing. Infected sheep can introduce the bacteria into the environment, where, depending on conditions, they can survive on pasture for up to 14 days, contributing to further cases. Footrot can also significantly contribute to the level of scald seen in crops of lambs.

Treatment: Prompt treatment with injectable antibiotics (oxytetracycline products like Alamycin LA or Tetroxy LA) alongside an anti-inflammatory painkiller (e.g. Metacam - note this is off-licence in sheep). Avoid trimming of infected feet as this can cause further tissue damage, delay healing and potentially contribute to the spread of infection. Isolating affected sheep allows closer monitoring and treatment while helping to reduce transmission within the flock.

CODD



CODD is a serious and highly infectious cause of lameness in sheep, with some flocks reporting 50% lameness in severe outbreaks. It typically starts with ulceration and loss of hair at the coronary band. The infection can progress downwards, undermining the hoof horn and potentially leading to complete loss of the hoof capsule. This leaves exposed, painful tissue and can result in severe lameness.

CODD is associated with *Treponema* bacteria and may occur alongside footrot. Outbreaks can have a substantial impact on flock welfare and productivity, with severe cases affecting a significant proportion of the flock.

Treatment: Early veterinary intervention is important. Antibiotic treatment may include amoxicillin products (e.g. Trymox LA or Citramox LA) or macrolide antibiotics (e.g. Draxxin or Zactran) in severe cases. An anti-inflammatory painkiller (Metacam) is also advised.

Do not trim CODD-affected feet. Trimming can damage already compromised tissue, delay healing and increase the risk of spreading infection. Isolate cases of CODD as soon as identified, as this aids regular treatment and reduces spread. Sheep must not rejoin the main flock until the feet have healed.

FIVE KEY STEPS TO PREVENT LAMENESS

A consistent flock-health plan is essential to reducing lameness. The following five measures can make a real difference:

1. **CULL** sheep that have been lame more than twice. Management tags or cable ties attached to ear tags can help identify repeat offenders.
2. **VACCINATE** where appropriate. Footvax may form part of a control programme for flocks affected by footrot and CODD - but discuss this with your vet about this first.
3. **TREAT** lame sheep as soon as possible, including ewes in late pregnancy.
4. **AVOID** spreading infection. Isolate lame animals, maintain areas around gateways and troughs, minimise prolonged

exposure to wet, muddy conditions. Consider using hydrated lime to reduce infection load in high risk areas.

5. **QUARANTINE** incoming sheep for at least 28 days, where practical. Inspect their feet and footbathe on arrival, and again before mixing. Treat any lesions seen.

OPEN YOUR GATE

An AHDB and LEAF initiative for farmers to help young people see farming first-hand

Help create 1 million on-farm learning experiences by 2031, connecting children with food, farming and sustainable British agriculture.

Why get involved?

- Share the story of sustainable British farming
- Help children understand where their food comes from
- Challenge myths and misconceptions
- Inspire future consumers and potential future careers
- Build trust in British agriculture
- Take pride in showcasing what you do every day

AHDB will help you host with confidence

- Fully funded support worth over £700
- Two-day CEVAS training course
- One-to-one support from a LEAF Education Specialist
- Health and safety, risk assessment and visit planning guidance
- Support connecting with local schools
- Access to a network of host farmers

HOW TO APPLY

1. Scan the QR code below
2. Review course details
3. Choose a preferred location and date
4. Complete the online form

Places are first come, first served.

SCAN TO APPLY

Apply online

https://ahdb.org.uk/schoolfarmvisits

The application page includes training course details and the farmer application form. Apply promptly if you have a preferred course location or date.

Dates for your diary

Practical calf health: post-mortem insights

Thurs 12 November, 6:15pm - 8:30pm
Market Drayton Livestock Market, TF9 3SW

Join us, alongside AHDB and UK-DCN, for this practical event to better understand the impact of diseases such as pneumonia and scours on calves, and how to reduce the risks. We will be joined by Ben Strugnell (Farm Post Mortems Ltd), who will be completing a post-mortem on a calf to identify signs of infection and disease and explain the anatomy of the gastrointestinal system. Food and refreshments will be available on arrival. Please book your place at *https://ahdb.org.uk/events/practical-calf-health-post-mortem-insights*

Intermediate (3-day) Hoof Trimming Course

Wed 18 - Fri 20 November - FULLY BOOKED

A course suitable for all skill levels, from those with no trimming experience to those having done it for years and needing a knowledge refresher. Theory includes anatomy, lesion identification and risk factors, and on-farm practical includes use of both knives and grinders. £800 + VAT. *The current course is fully booked but you can register interest in a future course online or with the office.*



Client Christmas Party

Thurs 3 December, time TBC

We look forward to welcoming you to our annual festivities at the Royal Oak, Worleston!



Get in touch...

nantwich farm vets LTD

Hurleston, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 6BU

01270 610349

office@nantwichfarmvets.co.uk
orders@nantwichfarmvets.co.uk

www.nantwichfarmvets.co.uk

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