

With spring just around the corner producers should begin thinking about formulating a strategy for internal and external parasite control. How do you decide if your cattle should be wormed, and what factors play into deciding what type of parasite control to implement in your operation? Although the method of protection may vary from herd to herd, it is wise, nonetheless, to make a plan for your parasite control strategy, and begin to set it in to place. This week we will discuss parasite control, and present a conversation you can have with your veterinarian that will help you formulate a parasite control strategy that will work for your operation.

Although some producers may be adamant about doing a herd wide treatment for parasites in early spring months, we encourage you that this is not ideal because the chances of reinfestation are very high at this time. Rather, we believe that the most optimum time for parasite control is in May. This is because May is typically at the end of the highest parasite exposure due to wet/moderate temperatures. However, some exceptions to this general rule do apply.

Producers frequently come to the clinic wanting wormer for their cattle for this time of year. Although we encourage the producer to be proactive in their parasite control method, it is best to first consider these questions before concluding that a herd wide parasite control should be used: 1) Are the cattle grazing pasture, or eating hay? 2) Is there any evidence of lice in the herd? That is, are the cattle rubbing or itching, and do the cattle have any patches of hair loss? 3) Were the cattle wormed last fall? If so, when? 4) What is the average body condition score of the cattle? Based on the producer's answers to these questions, a vet can determine if it is best to immediately implement a parasite control, or to wait until a more optimum time. These questions can also be used together to help formulate a plan. If the cattle are grazing pasture, and are below a body condition score of 4.5 at this time of year, deworming should become a serious consideration. However, if the cattle have adequate BCS, and were wormed last fall near the time of first frost, there is a good chance that these cattle do not need to be wormed at this time.

Formulating a parasite control program is very herd specific. A producer must take into account the various factors that affect the likelihood of his cattle being negatively affected by parasites. The questions above can be used as a guide in determining if a program should be implemented, but if there is any confusion at all, fecal samples should be taken. Rather than making guesses on if parasites are a problem in your herd, random fecal samples may be taken to determine if worming is appropriate this time of year. You should also keep in mind that if you feasibly cannot wait to deworm your cattle, and must do it now, we strongly recommend using LONGRANGE injectable wormer. It has a duration of 150 days, and thus would protect the cattle during highest parasite infestations. Please note, however, that LONGRANGE can be a bit more pricey compared to other injectable wormers. If you have any questions about LONGRANGE, or would like help creating a parasite control plan for your herd, please contact us.

Thanks,
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