

# BEEF

November 2016

## Treating for liver fluke

When you are treating your cattle for liver fluke at housing, are you doing it correctly? If you are, they should be free of the parasite for the winter as they cannot pick more fluke up while they are indoors. If it is not done correctly, growth rates will be below where they should be and, depending on the level of infection, they may be quite a lot below target. Doing it correctly means using the right product, at the right time, using the correct dose rate and administering it the right way. A common mistake made on some farms when it comes to treating cattle at housing for liver fluke is assuming that one treatment for liver fluke is enough to kill all of the fluke present. This may be the case but only if you do one of the following:

a) drench cattle two weeks after

housing with a product that has triclabendazole in it;

- b) if you are using a product that kills immature fluke (these are mostly injection and pour-on products) you wait for at least seven weeks after housing before you give it; or,
- c) if you are using a product that only kills mature fluke (these are mostly injection and oral drench products) you wait for at least 10 weeks after housing before you give it.

In all other situations you will have to treat cattle twice over the winter for fluke. For example, if you are using a product two weeks after housing (which is a common time to treat for stomach worms and lice) that controls immature and adult fluke, you will have to treat them again five weeks later with a similar fluke product.

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Doing it correctly also means doing the following:

1. accurately estimating the weight of the cattle you are treating to decide on the correct dose rate. For a group of cattle, base your dose rate on the heaviest animal in the

group (if there is a very wide range in weights you will have to adjust the rate accordingly); and,

2. if using fluke treatments that are to be given by injection it is under the skin they are to be given (not into the muscle).

## New display boards at marts



*New boards displaying €uro-Star figures are now being installed in most marts.*

Livestock marts throughout the country are now installing new display boards

which will provide the most up to date €uro-Star figures from the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) on beef breeding animals that enter the ring. This is an ongoing process as many more marts have plans to install these new boards. In order for beef animals to have €uro-Star figures displayed on the board they must:

- be from a herd that is currently taking part in the Beef Data Genomics Programme (BDGP) or be from a herd which is currently subscribed to ICBF's subscription service 'HerdPlus';
- be either four or five stars on either 'within' or 'across breed' stars for the replacement index; and,
- only pedigree males will have the Terminal Index displayed for them.

If you are currently participating in the BDGP programme or are a member of HerdPlus, your

animals will be displayed if they are four or five star. If you are not participating in the BDGP programme, you will have to sign up to HerdPlus in order to have your animals' figures displayed. It is important to note three points in relation to these new mart display boards.

1. While animals may be displayed as being four or five star for the replacement index, they may not be genomically tested (the boards will soon be updated to show whether or not they are genomically tested). Only females that are genomically tested as being four or five star on the replacement index will be counted when BDGP herds are being assessed in 2018 and 2020 for having the correct percentage of high index females in their herds. Purchased animals will have to be genomically tested if they are not already, which may change their €uro-Star value.
2. Where females are now purchased for BDGP herds, they must be born from January 1, 2013 onwards or they will not be counted in 2018 and 2020 when calculating the percentage of high index females in a herd.
3. Females must be a minimum of 16 months of age on October 31, 2018 and 2020 to be counted. Therefore, for 2018 only heifers born before the July 1, 2017 will qualify.

# Selling clean cattle

The issue of dirty cattle being presented for slaughter is beginning to become a significant problem at meat plants throughout the country. Cattle that are being sold out of sheds usually score the poorest on the A, B, C category system for scoring cleanliness, where category C is an unacceptable animal that cannot be slaughtered due to the level of dirt on its hide. There is an onus on farmers, hauliers and factory operators to ensure that the maximum number of animals get into category A, where the risk of contaminating the meat during the slaughter process is at its lowest. Dirty cattle cost money and risk our valuable beef and hide markets. Teagasc has brought out a leaflet that provides farmers with clear guidelines on the five areas that they can focus on to improve cattle cleanliness. This is available through our local offices and can also be downloaded from our website.

## 1. Diet

- ▶ Where possible feed higher dry matter diets.
- ▶ Reduce the amount of wet silages, roots and molasses pre slaughter.
- ▶ Avoid any sudden changes to the diet.

## 2. Housing

- ▶ Avoid overstocking and understocking of cattle on slats.
- ▶ Keep any solid areas in the shed free from dung build up.
- ▶ When using straw bedding bed regularly using adequate amounts.
- ▶ Sheds should be well ventilated to keep cattle clean and dry.

*A guide to clean cattle is available from Teagasc.*

## 3. Husbandry

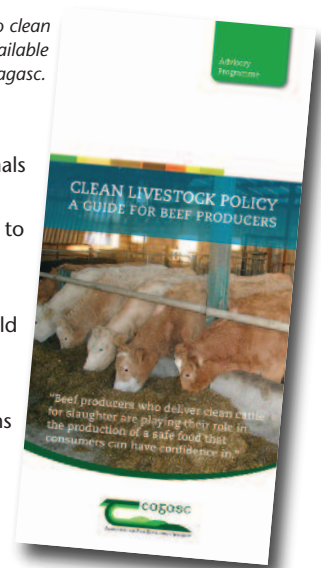
- ▶ Keep animals dosed and worm free to minimise scouring.
- ▶ Diets should be well balanced for vitamins and minerals.
- ▶ Trim tails and along the backs of cattle at housing time.

## 4. Pre-sale management

- ▶ Do not mix unfamiliar groups of cattle.
- ▶ Remove any low dry matter feeds in the final 48 hours pre slaughter and replace with straw or high DM silage.
- ▶ Do not restrict water or starve cattle in the final 24 hours.
- ▶ Cattle that are very dirty should ideally be moved to dry straw bedding in the final two-to-three weeks pre-slaughter.

## 5. Transport

- ▶ Avoid loading cattle that are very wet or in wet conditions.
- ▶ Covered trailers should be well ventilated to avoid stock sweating.
- ▶ Do not use sawdust on the trailer floor.
- ▶ Hauliers should pen cattle correctly and check them regularly during transit.
- ▶ Vehicles should be cleaned and disinfected between loads.



## Feeding to calve at two years

Only 16% of heifers in suckler herds calve between 22 and 26 months of age. This is too low a figure when you consider all the advantages compared to heifers that calve at three years of age:

- more output from the heifer over her lifetime (more calves produced);
- reduced stocking rate compared with calving heifers at older ages;
- potential to reduce the number of groups of stock on the farm; and,
- reduces costs – Grange work shows that for a 50-cow herd with a 20% replacement rate, each additional month that calving is delayed is costing the herd almost €500.

One of the main reasons why heifers are not bred to calve at two years of age is because they

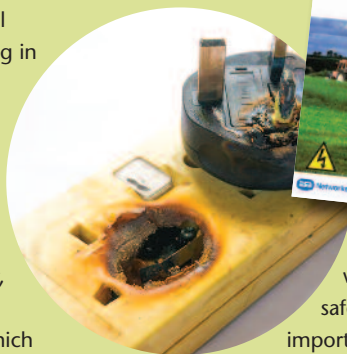
are too light at the start of the breeding season and they do not start bulling. Puberty in heifers is more related to weight than to age so a good plane of nutrition is important. Heifers should be 60% of their mature cow weight (weight at five years old) at the start of the breeding season, e.g., 420kg if mature cow weight is 700kg. Most spring-born heifers will need to put on 60-80kg of liveweight over their first winter so they will need good quality silage plus 1-2kg of concentrates. Many farmers feed this group of stock in their own group in a separate pen so that their winter performance can be monitored closely and their diet can be adjusted if necessary. Also if no other group of stock are turned out early to grass next spring, this is the group that should get priority over all other cattle on the farm.



### HEALTH & SAFETY

## Check your electrics

Check your lighting and electrical facilities now as darkness is setting in and the clocks have gone back. Now is the time to make some vital safety checks. Firstly, the electrical safety switch or 32mA residual current device (RCD) is a highly effective safety device for portable appliances. However, an Irish study indicates that over 15% do not trip when tested, which could lead to electrocution.



Consult the ESB Networks' booklet – 'Farm Safely with Electricity' – which is

available at [www.esbnetworks.ie/staying-safe/farm-safety](http://www.esbnetworks.ie/staying-safe/farm-safety). Most

importantly, check that fire/smoke alarms in the home are in working order.