



Management Guide Controlling Coccidiosis In Nursing Calves

Coccidia are parasites that calves ingest as early as their day of birth. The coccidia live within the lining of the calf's intestine, multiply, and damage the intestinal lining. Digestion is impaired and the calf loses water and blood via the damaged intestinal lining. Symptoms can be scours, bloody scours, dehydration, impaired weight gain, weight loss, and this can lead to mortality.

Coccidiosis can be prevented by using coccidiostats such as amprolium (Corrid[®]), decoquinate (Deccox[®]), lasalocid (Bovatec[®]), or monensin (Rumensin[®]). Amprolium can also be used as a treatment. Decoquinate and lasalocid are cleared to prevent coccidiosis when used in calf milk replacers. Amprolium can be used as a drench in suckling calves to treat or prevent coccidiosis. Decoquinate, lasalocid, and monensin can be added to dry calf starters to prevent coccidiosis.

Coccidiosis is a prevalent illness that can sometimes be mistaken for bacterial scours. If your calves are frequently challenged with coccidiosis, purchasing a milk replacer with a coccidiostat is a good option. Another option might be to develop a drenching program using amprolium to prevent or treat coccidiosis and feed a non-medicated or antibiotic-containing milk replacer.

Always feed a dry calf starter containing either decoquinate, lasalocid, or monensin. Each of these products included in a dry starter will support greater daily gains than no medication, are cost effective, and serve to prevent coccidiosis. Because dry starter consumption is low for the first 3 to 4 weeks of life, adequate levels of the coccidiostat may not be consumed to prevent coccidiosis.

Rates of Available Products to Treat or Prevent Coccidiosis in Calves		
Drug (product)	Mode of Delivery	Rate of Drug
FOR TREATMENT:		
Amprolium (Corrid [®])	Drench	454 mg/100 lb body weight for 5 days
FOR PREVENTION:		
Amprolium (Corrid [®])	Drench	227 mg/100 lb body weight for 21 days
Decoquinate (Deccox [®])	Milk Replacer or Dry Starter	22.7 mg/100 lb body weight for at least 28 days
Lasalocid (Bovatec [®])	Milk Replacer or Dry Starter	45.4 mg/100 lb body weight fed continuously
Monensin (Rumensin [®])	Dry Starter	10 to 30 g/ton fed continuously

Amprolium[®] is a registered trademark of Merck Ag Vet. Bovatec[®] is a registered trademark of Hoffman-LaRoche. Deccox[®] is a registered trademark of Alpharma. Rumensin is a registered trademark of Elanco Animal Health.

A Clean Environment Helps to Prevent Coccidiosis

The National Dairy Database suggests the most useful practice to reduce production losses from coccidiosis is maintaining a clean, dry environment for the young calf.

Clean the calf's living area, maintain clean, dry bedding, and provide clean feed and water buckets, bunks, or troughs. When possible, design pens with some exposure to sunlight daily. Also, design pens that minimize humidity (good air flow and ventilation) and drain well in order to maintain dry bedding.

Stress May Lead to Outbreaks

It appears that stressed calves are more likely to have clinical outbreaks of coccidiosis than calves that are not stressed. For example, coccidiosis outbreaks can often occur at or immediately after weaning due to the stresses of weaning. Major changes in the weather or the calf's diet may also stress calves and lead to outbreaks of coccidiosis.