

## Prevent coccidiosis this winter

Coccidia are so common in the United States that they can be found in beef and dairy calves from operations of all sizes and in all seasons, including cold winter weather.<sup>1</sup> This means almost all calves are vulnerable to the damaging effects of coccidiosis, especially when the stress of changing weather creates a higher risk for disease.

“It’s a costly disease,” says Joe Dedrickson, associate director, Merial Veterinary Services. “Across the beef and dairy industries, coccidiosis causes more than \$100 million in losses every year.<sup>2</sup> This is why producers need to have a prevention program in place for winter — to help stop the loss before it starts.” Dedrickson says it is important

producers understand the following 10 concepts to better combat this difficult disease:

- Calves from all environments and operations are at risk of developing coccidiosis.<sup>1,2</sup>
- The prevalence of coccidiosis infection is usually high, with reports of 100% in calves.<sup>3</sup>

- Coccidiosis is a stress-induced disease. Stressors include weaning, shipping, putting animals into large groups, changing rations and — the most common — changing weather.<sup>1</sup>
- In addition to causing stress, cold weather causes animals to group together, multiplying the risk of infection.<sup>1</sup>
- Diagnosis of coccidiosis is difficult, and visible signs don’t occur until three to eight weeks after the initial infection. By then, much of the economic damage is already done.<sup>4</sup>
- Diagnosis by fecal exam may not always be effective because the passage of oocysts, the infective form of coccidia, lags even behind the onset of clinical signs.<sup>4</sup>
- Prevention must be twofold:
  - Use good animal husbandry measures to prevent ingestion of oocysts by cattle.<sup>2</sup>
  - Use a coccidiostat with a prevention and treatment label to combat the disease before it starts.
- Pay careful attention to maintaining preventive levels for periods long enough to affect the life cycle of coccidia.<sup>2</sup>
- If treatment is needed, use a coccidiostat solution product at the first signs of the disease — such as diarrhea and dehydration. Producers should consider treating on a herd basis. Once a calf shows signs of the disease, it is likely the rest of the group has been exposed.<sup>2</sup>
- Because of the difficulty of identifying the disease before the damage is done, prevention methods are best to help avoid subclinical and clinical incidences of coccidiosis.

Representing Merial, Dedrickson recommends CORID® (amprolium) as a prevention or treatment regimen.

“CORID is effective as an aid in preventing coccidiosis because coccidia grow in the cells that line the intestine and CORID stops them at a critical stage while they’re in the host’s small intestine,” Dedrickson says. “This helps to prevent more damaging cases of clinical coccidiosis from occurring in the large intestine.”

It also is effective as an aid in a treatment regimen, he says, so producers can use it when they see an outbreak.



**Footnotes:** CORID should be used for a period of 21 days<sup>5</sup> and carries a 24-hour harvest withdrawal time.

<sup>1</sup>Jolley, W.R., Bardsley, K.D. *Veterinary Clinics Food Animal Practice*. New York: Elsevier, 2006:613-621.

<sup>2</sup>Kirkpatrick, J.G., et al. *Coccidiosis in cattle*. Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service Fact Sheet F-9129.

<sup>3</sup>Dauguschies, A., Najdrowski, M. *Eimeriosis in cattle: current understanding*. *J Vet Med B* 2005; 52:417-427.

<sup>4</sup>Kvasnicka, B. *Coccidiosis in beef cattle*. Cattle Producer’s Library CL685. University of Nevada Extension Beef Cattle Resource Committee.

<sup>5</sup>CORID product label.

**Editor’s Note:** This article is adapted from an article provided by Merial.