

Winter Dysentery

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What is Winter Dysentery?

Winter dysentery is an infectious disease that affects all ages of cattle. It is extremely infectious with up to 100% of cattle being affected, but death is very rare. Its cause is unknown but acoronavirus is the current favourite.

Clinical Signs

- Severe, watery, foul-smelling dark brown diarrhoea
- The diarrhoea may be explosive
- There may be some blood in the faeces
- Usually seen in one or two cattle at first, but spreads rapidly, with most older cattle being affected within two weeks
- Appetite is usually normal, but milk yield may be reduced by 50%
- Usually lasts two to three days

Diagnosis

- On the clinical signs described above
 - Initial cases may look like a poisoning or feed problem, but rapid spread and severity (without death) makes diagnosis relatively easy
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Treatment

- No effective treatment, and most cows recover within three days
- If dehydration occurs then electrolytes (by mouth or by vein if very severe) are essential

Prevention

- 1) The disease may be brought on farm by outside personnel, such as veterinarians, consultants, hoof trimmers, and representatives. So ensure that such staff are clean prior to entry
- 2) Bought-in cattle are also an important source of disease
- 3) If an outbreak occurs, no cattle or unnecessary personnel should enter the farm and strict disinfection should occur before anybody leaves the farm
- 4) After an outbreak, herd immunity tends to reduce the risk of another outbreak for about five years

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