

# COCCIDIOSIS: THE START OF MANY CHALLENGES

When cattle producers feel like their antibiotic treatment for bovine respiratory disease (BRD) isn't working, it's easy to want to reach for a different product. While the product could be to blame, it's usually one of the least likely reasons for treatment failure.

"When producers ask about improving treatment results for BRD, I'll often ask them what their control plan is for coccidiosis," said John Pollreis, DVM, Beef Technical Services at Zoetis. "Most customers look puzzled when I ask them this question because they consider coccidiosis to be a disease that only produces bloody scours."

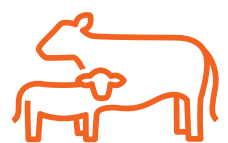
According to Dr. Pollreis, coccidiosis is often misunderstood and underdiagnosed. Coccidiosis is caused by intestinal protozoan parasites that typically affect starting, lighter-weight cattle. This parasitic disease itself isn't the biggest problem; it's that coccidiosis can contribute to much larger issues, including:

- 1. BRD.** Starting cattle have compromised immune systems to begin with, and when the immune system is further compromised by coccidia, the door is opened for more harmful pathogens, such as those associated with BRD.
- 2. The calf's ability to respond to vaccines and anti-infectives.** A compromised immune system also makes it nearly impossible for the calf to respond to vaccinations or antibiotic treatment.
- 3. Reducing feed consumption and efficiency.** Because coccidia destroy intestinal cells, this impacts the use of nutrients in feed as well as feed consumption and efficiency.
- 4. Gut damage.** The clinical signs of coccidiosis (bloody scours) do not appear until the coccidian life cycle is almost complete; by that time, the gut may be severely damaged.
- 5. Increasing death rates.** With severe coccidiosis outbreaks, it isn't unheard of to see death rates around 25%.

## IT TAKES A TEAM TO TAKE ON COCCIDIOSIS

"With coccidiosis, diagnosis isn't always a black-and-white process," Dr. Pollreis said. "Diagnosis is based upon identification of coccidia oocysts — or eggs — in feces of cattle, but there are times when many oocysts are being shed and times when few or none are being shed. This can create some confusion and uncertainty in diagnostic techniques."

That's why it's a better approach to implement a coccidiosis control plan. Managing against coccidiosis early in the coccidia life cycle is the most effective approach.





Producers need to work together with their nutritionist and herd veterinarian on a plan that establishes mutual objectives. This includes everything from starting cattle healthy to building cattle up onto an ionophore they'll remain on for the entire feeding period.

Blaine Corners, PhD, senior beef cattle nutritionist with Zoetis, weighs in with an approach he and Dr. PollreisZ have recommended with several producers and their veterinarians or nutritionists.

### 1. **Get lightweight (300- to 500-pound) calves started on feed to help prevent coccidiosis and get a healthy start.**

- **Enough usable protein, energy and mineral content in the ration.** Ration design with plenty of easily digestible protein, energy and mineral content, specifically trace minerals, is important so calves have the nutrition they need to mount an immune response. Dr. Corners points out that when determining ingredients and nutrient density, consider that calves might not consume as much feed initially as projected.
- **Highly palatable ration.** Feed intake is a challenge in lightweight calves, but a highly palatable ration encourages intake.
- **A coccidiostat in the ration that prevents coccidiosis.** DECCOX® is a feed additive that can be included in the ration to prevent coccidiosis.

### 2. **Once coccidiosis is being adequately addressed through nutrition, keep animals healthy by:**

- **Ensuring proper timing of vaccines.** Vaccine timing is essential for the best immune response. A herd veterinarian can help identify what vaccines are needed and timing of those vaccinations for your geographical area.
- **Addressing BRD.** BRD can become the real killer if the immune system is suppressed. Good management, a strong relationship with a nutritionist and the veterinarian, and effective injectable antibiotics and/or medicated feed additives can help in effectively managing BRD.
- **Good management.** Management also is an important part of a coccidiosis control plan. Pen sanitation helps in reducing the number of organisms that the animals could encounter.

### 3. **Once calves are healthy, energy can then be directed to growth versus fighting disease.**

- **Incorporate an ionophore.** An ionophore such as BOVATEC® can help boost feed efficiency and weight gain, while also controlling coccidiosis. Visit with your nutritionist about ionophore options.
- **Use an appropriate implant.** An appropriate growth implant can help improve weight gain. To help find the right fit to discuss with your veterinarian, visit [GrowWithSynovex.com](http://GrowWithSynovex.com) and utilize the implant finder tool.

It's not just coccidiosis that producers are controlling; it's stopping the cascading effect of complications on cattle health and gain.

"Coccidiosis is way too often overlooked," Dr. PollreisZ said. "Because of its immunosuppressive effects, it can be the cause of more starting cattle health issues than people think."

**For more information on starting cattle and about feed additive solutions Zoetis offers, visit [cattlefeedadditives.com](http://cattlefeedadditives.com).**

Do not use BOVATEC in calves to be processed for veal. Do not allow horses or other equines access to feeds containing lasalocid, as ingestion may be fatal. Feeding undiluted or mixing errors resulting in excessive concentrations of lasalocid could be fatal to cattle and sheep.

Do not use DECCOX in cows producing milk for human consumption.

Do not use SYNOVEX products in veal calves. Refer to label for complete directions for use, precautions, and warnings.

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