

Gastrointestinal Nematode Management Strategies In Western Canadian Beef Herds

Methods

In 2016, 105 cow-calf herds in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba were studied and their gastrointestinal nematode management practises were recorded. Median herd size was 197 cow-calf pairs.

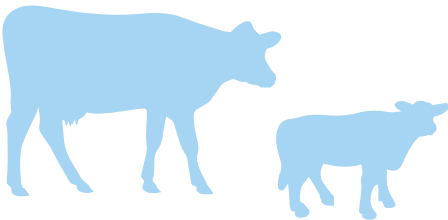
Findings

i. Grazing Management:

- **61%** of herds started the grazing season in May, with **29%** starting in June.
- Median length of the grazing period was **158 days** with **53%** of herds ending in October.
- Rotational grazing (moving cattle throughout different pasture types without directly managing animal distribution) was the most common system used for cow-calf pairs (**44%**) and replacement heifers (**49%**).
- A combination of systems of grazing for cow-calf pairs (**32%**) and continuous grazing in replacement heifers (**35%**) were the second most frequent strategies used.
- Intensive grazing (in which the producer determines when, where, and what the livestock graze, at a set stocking density) was used in only **3%** of herds, for cow-calf pairs or replacement heifers.

ii. Treatment With Parasite Control Products

- **98%** of producers treated cows and heifers with at least one registered parasite control product; **46%** treated calves at least once.
- Most cows and replacement heifers were treated for parasites in **November**. In the 45 herds reporting the date of calf parasite treatments, these were evenly split between Spring (March to May) and Fall (October to December).
- For herds reporting the method of application, a topical pour-on was used alone or in combination, in cows (**99% of herds**), replacement heifers (**95%**) and calves (**87%**).
- For all groups of animals, the most commonly used parasite control products were macro-cyclic lactones, in cows (**99% of herds**), replacement heifers (**95%**) and calves (**87%**). All drenches/in-feed or mineral products were benzimidazoles.
- Most (**76%**) producers eyeballed weights to estimate a dose.
- **97%** of producers described their reason for using parasite control treatment as 'routine herd management practice'; **29%** to 'control external parasites', and none indicated 'control of internal parasites'.
- Only a third of producers used fecal egg counts to monitor gastrointestinal nematodes in their herd, primarily in cows (**24%**); rarely (**2%**) in calves and none in bulls.



Conclusions

- Predominate management practices reported increase the risk of development of anthelmintic resistance.
- This study identified a need for evidence-based gastrointestinal nematode control in western Canadian beef herds.