

Cattle Parasite Management in the PNW

Are Your Dewormers Still Working?

Parasite resistance to common dewormers (**anthelmintics**) is a growing reality in cattle operations across the Pacific Northwest. Relying on the same product year after year without monitoring its effectiveness can lead to reduced weight gains, poor reproduction, and wasted money.

1. Signs of Parasite Resistance

If you notice the following even *after* treating your cattle, your dewormer may be failing:

- **Poor body condition** or failure to gain weight.
 - **Rough hair coats** that do not shed out in spring.
 - **Diarrhea** or "bottle jaw" (swelling under the jaw).
 - High parasite egg counts in feces shortly after treatment.
-

2. How to Test Your Program: The FECRT

The only way to know if your dewormer is working is to use a **Fecal Egg Count Reduction Test (FECRT)**.

The Procedure (Work with your Veterinarian):

1. **Day 0:** Collect fresh fecal samples from at least **15–20 randomly selected cattle** in a group. These animals must be from the same management group (e.g., all stockers, or all heifers).
2. **Day 0:** Treat the herd according to label directions (ensure proper dosing based on weight).
3. **Day 14:** Collect samples from the **exact same animals** you sampled on Day 0.
4. **Analysis:** Send samples to a lab to compare the reduction in parasite eggs.

Interpreting Results

Percentage Reduction	Meaning	Action
> 95%	Highly Effective	Continue the current program.
90% - 95%	Suspected Resistance	Monitor closely; consult a vet.
< 90%	Resistance Detected	Change dewormer class immediately.

3. Strategies for the Pacific Northwest

The wet, temperate climate of the PNW allows parasite larvae to survive well on pastures.

- **Rotate Pastures:** Move cattle frequently to prevent grazing near fecal pats, where larvae concentrate.
- **Stocking Density:** Lower stocking density reduces the risk of cattle grazing close to the ground, where the highest concentration of larvae exists.
- **Quarantine:** Treat new arrivals with a broad-spectrum dewormer and hold them in a dry lot for 10-14 days before turning them out on pasture.

4. Best Practices Checklist

- **Dose by weight:** Weigh your heaviest animal and dose for that weight, or group cattle by weight classes.
- **Check equipment:** Ensure your guns are calibrated and working correctly.
- **Read the label:** Know the withdrawal times for meat or milk.
- **Switch classes:** Rotate between different classes of dewormers (e.g., Macrocytic Lactones vs. Benzimidazoles) rather than just switching brands within the same class.

