



# Guide to Egg Count Results

StockWatch Worm Egg Count Laboratory offers simple tests that help livestock owners identify stock that require drenching and those that don't. Worm egg counting also known as a faecal egg count is an invaluable tool to help achieve sustainable worm control.

This is one of the most useful worm management tools a livestock producer can utilise. A worm egg count is a count of the number of worm eggs in a sample of dung. The results are expressed as 'eggs per gram' (epg) of dung, and split between the roundworm species of Strongyle and Nematodirus eggs as observed. StockWatch will also report if Coccidia and Tapeworm eggs are present.

## STOCKWATCH – WORM COUNTS - GREAT VALUE FOR MONEY

- Save on the expense of unnecessary yarding and drenching.
- Help you curb a disaster due to heavy worm infection.
- A Worm Egg Count can also be used as a simple and quick way to check drench effectiveness. (Collect samples 10 to 15 days after using a particular drench to measure effectiveness).
- Worm Egg Counts are a useful tool to monitor your worm control program.

## INTERPRETING ROUNDWORM EGG COUNT RESULTS

It is very difficult to give hard and fast rules on interpreting egg counts, as there are so many variables to consider. These include:

### Age of animals:

Adult dry animals in good condition tolerate worms much better than young or poor animals.

### Nutritional status:

Well nourished animals develop stronger immunity to worms faster and so withstand a worm challenge better than poorer animals. Sometimes moving animals onto a better paddock is as good as a drench.

### Physiological Status:

Are these animals young and growing, pregnant or rearing young? All factors that can place added stress on their systems and render them more susceptible to worm infestations. Young animals, such as weaners, are an important group to sample because they tend to be quite vulnerable to worms.

## FURTHER ADVICE:

The table below offers a guide to egg counts and is not hard and fast for many reasons, which include those stated above. StockWatch suggests you contact your vet for the best advice.

### What do my results mean? epg (eggs per gram)

#### Sheep, Cattle, Goats, Deer, Alpaca.

<200 epg - drench probably not required

>200-500 epg - seek advice

>500 epg - drench probably required

**Note for Pigs:** Any sign of *Ascaris suum* in young pigs should be addressed in infected pigs. Eggs will generally show up after 9 to 10 weeks of age.

### Egg Type:

The report shows numbers of **Roundworm** eggs present split into two groups (Strongyle and Nematodirus) and may offer a comment on Coccidia Cysts and Tapeworm eggs if observed. Generally for most producers it is not necessary to further type the worm eggs as drenching for one type of Strongyle worm will also remove the others. Larval culturing and egg typing will be become available at Stockwatch at a latter date.

## **Forecasting:**

A decision to drench or not, based on an egg count, may also be influenced by how wormy pastures are likely to get in the coming weeks and months, if you have a low to medium egg count and have the option of moving the mob to cleaner fresh pasture, then drenching may not be required.

## **Management Factors:**

If animals are to be mustered for some other reason, you may decide to drench based on egg count as well as convenience. The egg counts with the other factors listed gives you the power to make an informed decision.

## **Nematodirus sp:**

**Thin Necked Intestinal Worm:** Occurs in most of the major sheep production areas of Australia and is mostly an issue in the winter rainfall districts. It can cause scouring in young sheep. It is very resilient and survives severe winters and dry conditions. Heavy infections of thin necked intestinal worms can cause diarrhoea in lambs. Thin necked intestinal worm can be a serious problem in young sheep in cool regions or after dry periods when sheep graze short, green feed. In sheep with heavy infections, tangled masses of worms are found in the lower part of the small intestine.

**Strongyle sp:** Includes most of the significant worm species such as:

**Barbers Pole Worm:** cause anaemia as they suck blood from the lining of the stomach. Signs of a heavy infestation include lack of stamina, pale gums, and possibly bottle-jaw and constipation. Keep an eye on stock in the warmer moist months as levels can escalate very quickly.

**Brown Stomach Worm:** Damage the lining of the stomach as they mature. Stock with heavy infections of this type will lose condition quickly, scour profusely and may die. Animals with a lower burden are unthrifty and daggy. Burdens as low as 150 epg in cattle can cause ill-thrift in young cattle.

**Black Scour Worm:** Damage the lining of the first three metres of the small intestine. Stock with heavy infections of black scour worms may lose condition very quickly and develop scours, which may be black. In young cattle burdens of 50 epg in cattle can cause ill-thrift.

*StockWatch Faecal Egg Counts will also report if Coccidia and Tapeworm eggs are present. The implications of these parasites are outlined below:*

**Coccidia: Includes Toxoplasma and Sarcocystis.** Their life cycles include cats and dogs as hosts respectively. Toxoplasma can cause abortion in ewes having their first lamb. Death of young lambs may also occur. Animals severely affected Sarcocystis may be stunted or may abort. Also condition is often associated with overcrowding in young stock. Generally unless very high numbers are observed they are not considered to have an economic influence.

**Tapeworm:** We report the presence of tapeworm eggs. The jury is still out on exactly the effects to animals of tapeworm. Young animal appear more susceptible. Folklore blames tapeworms for all manner of problems, but none of it is substantiated.

**Liver Fluke: (Fasciola Hepatica)** StockWatch Liver Fluke Test Results are represented as either Positive or Negative. A positive result indicates the presence of adult liverfluke. If positive, management actions are most likely required. Animals grazing creeks and wet marshy areas favoured by the fluke snail (*Lymnaea tomentosa* - an indigenous freshwater snail) are likely to become infected.

## **Remember:**

If in doubt get expert advice to help interpret egg counts. Your vet would be the best place to start.

*Can you afford to be feeding worms!*

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