

Disease Factsheet

Bovine Neosporosis



What is Neospora?

Neospora caninum is a protozoa, (microscopic parasite) which can infect cattle grazing on infected pasture. Infection in a herd creates significant economic losses, these are due to; abortions, still births, brain damaged calves, premature culling, reduced milk yield and reduced post weaning weight. Abortions occur between 3-9 months, but are most common at the 5-7 month stage of gestation.

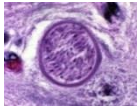
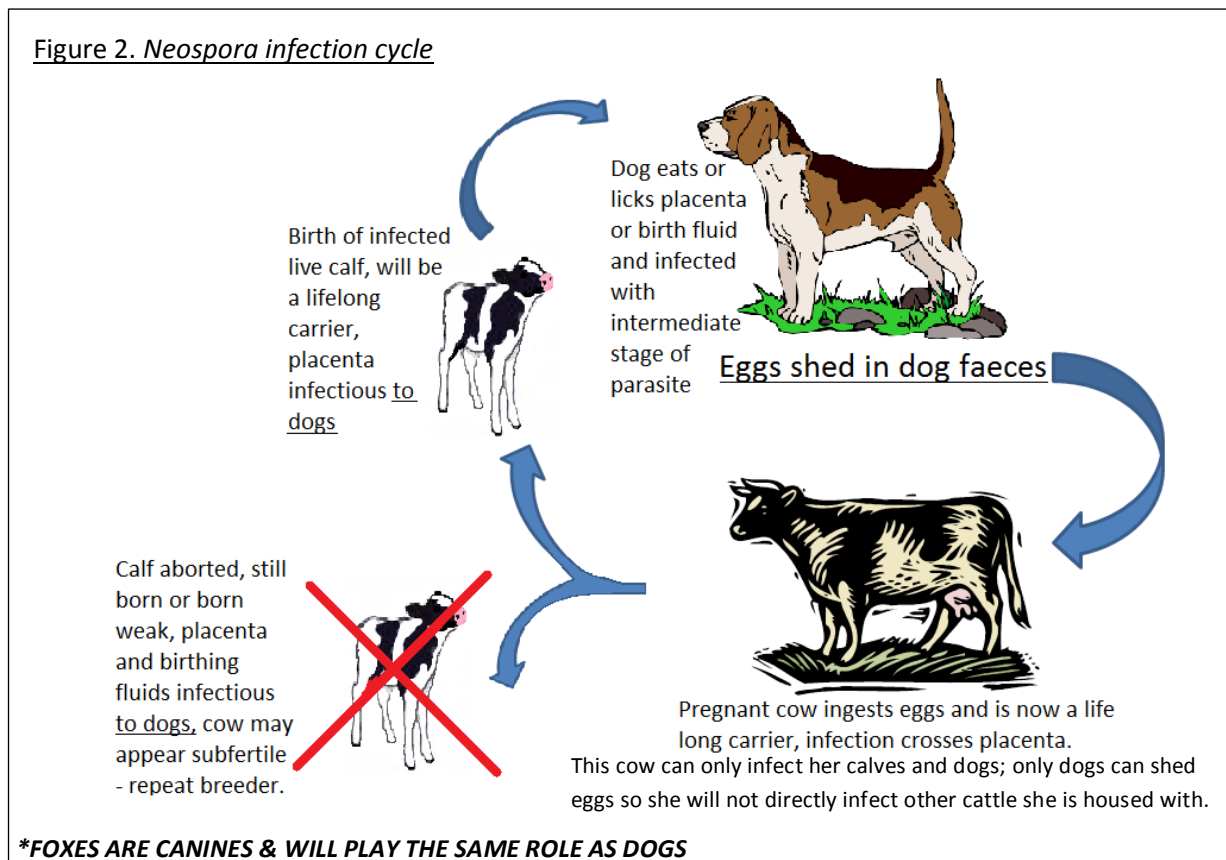


Figure 1. Microscopic image of a calf's brain infected with *Neospora caninum*

There is no known treatment or vaccination available for *Neospora* infection, therefore if it is present in your herd it is important to understand how it is transmitted to eradicate it and prevent re-infection.

Figure 2. *Neospora* infection cycle



How can you test for Neospora?

Individual bloods and bulk milk may be tested for antibody or post-mortem examination of calf will show the parasite itself as well as changes to the calves heart muscle & brain.

How do I control and eradicate it?

1. **Identify infected cattle and either cull them or put to a beef bull:** Cattle with antibodies to *Neospora* almost always give birth to infected calves (90%). Additionally cattle with antibodies are 20 times more likely to abort between 90 and 270 days of pregnancy than cattle without antibodies which increases the argument to cull. Finally, on average, infected cows produce less milk than antibody negative cows.
2. **DO NOT KEEP HEIFER CALVES FROM POSITIVE COWS AS REPLACEMENTS**
3. **Check status of any animals bought in prior to breeding**
4. **Birth fluids and placenta's should be disposed of ASAP so as in-accessible to farm dogs or foxes**
5. **Discourage dog walking on your farm and by keeping a clean yard discourage interest on your land from scavenging foxes or other wildlife which may attract fox attention.**

These strategies look expensive to achieve, however the cost of neosporosis far outweighs the cost of eliminating it from the herd.