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STUDIES OF SOME ASPECTS OF GASTROINTESTINAL  
NEMATODES AND DICTYOCAULUS VIVIPARUS  
OF FARMED RED DEER

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of  
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Mark Vere Anderson  
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Studies were carried out on aspects of the treatment and control of gastrointestinal nematodes and D. viviparus in red deer, under New Zealand farming conditions. In addition, the relationship between faecal egg count and gastrointestinal worm count was investigated.

In the first study an anthelmintic-impregnated supplementary feed treatment regime incorporating 200mg albendazole per kg of deer nuts (medicated nuts), fed to give 5mg albendazole per kg liveweight daily for three 10-day treatments with 21 day intervals between treatments, was given to eight weaner deer in the autumn. This treatment was compared with 3-weekly single oral administration of albendazole (10mg/kg) to eight similar deer under the same conditions (set-stocked in small pasture plots and given 2kg concentrate feed per head, per day) and a similarly treated group rotationally grazed on pasture alone. Reductions in faecal egg and larval counts were the same for all three groups, but reinfestation in spring was more rapid in the pasture-fed deer. Liveweights were the same for all groups throughout the experimental period from March to November. As an adjunct to this trial, medicated nuts were fed at the same dose-rate to 16 adult hinds. All faecal egg and larval counts were reduced to zero within 10 days. Thus, anthelmintic-impregnated concentrate feed is an effective

way of controlling gastrointestinal and lung nematodes in deer.

The above trial and another on a commercial property showed that high faecal larval counts may be found in weaner deer where deer are set-stocked from before calving up to weaning, or if parasite control programmes are delayed until six weeks after weaning in March. A single oral dose of albendazole at 10mg/kg was found to reduce D. viviparus faecal larval counts and gastrointestinal nematode faecal egg counts by approximately 99% seven days after treatment. Faecal larval and egg counts were usually slightly elevated 21 days after treatment, suggesting either a rapid reinfestation and short prepatent period of the parasites in deer and/or an efficacy of albendazole of less than 100% against immature stages of the gut and lung nematodes.

In a third study, cutaneous application of levamisole (20% W/V) at a dose-rate of 10mg levamisole per kg was found to be ineffective in reducing faecal egg or larval counts in a group of 23 red deer under two years of age.

The fourth study involved collection of abomasa and intestines of 46 deer sent to a deer slaughter premises. A faecal egg count was performed and the gastrointestinal nematodes were identified and counted. The largest gut parasite burdens were of Trichostrongylus axei with counts up to 12,900. Five deer-specific species of the tribe Ostertagia, Spiculoptera spiculoptera, Spiculoptera asymmetrica, Ostertagia leptospicularis, Skrjabinagia kolchida and Skrjabinagia lyratiformis were also common (counts up to 2470). Few other parasites were found and numbers were low (0 to 90). The relationship between worm count and faecal egg count was described by the relationship: Total Worm Count = 18.8 (Faecal Egg Count) - 341. However, there were few deer with high worm and egg counts and this relationship must therefore be regarded as tentative until more work can be carried out in deer with high worm burdens.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Acknowledgements	iv
CHAPTER I: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	1
1.1 Lungworm: <u>Dictyocaulus viviparus</u>	1
1.1.1 Occurrence	1
1.1.2 Epidemiology	3
1.1.3 Pathogenicity	5
1.1.4 Clinical Signs and Diagnosis	6
1.1.5 Treatment and Control	7
1.2 Gastrointestinal Nematodes	10
1.2.1 Occurrence	10
1.2.2 Epidemiology	12
1.2.3 Pathogenicity	14
1.2.4 Clinical Signs and Diagnosis	15
1.2.5 Treatment and Control	16
1.2.5.1 Anthelmintics	16
1.2.5.2 Intergration Of Treatment and Grazing	18
1.3 Feed Requirements and Growth of Red Deer	19
1.3.1 Birthweight	19
1.3.2 Birth To 3 Months (Weaning)	20
1.3.3 3-12 Months	21
CHAPTER 2: STUDY OF ALBENDAZOLE IN A CONCENTRATE FEED PREPARATION	22
2.1 Introduction	22
2.2 Part 1: Weaner Deer	23
2.3 Materials and Methods	23
2.3.1 Deer	23
2.3.2 Supplementary Feedstuff	24
2.3.3 Experimental Design	24
2.3.4 Management	27
2.3.5 Observations	29
2.3.6 Animal Health	29
2.4 Statistical Analysis	30
2.4.1 Larval and Egg Counts	30

	PAGE
2.4.2 Liveweights	32
2.5 Results	32
2.5.1 Faecal Larval Counts	32
2.5.2 Faecal Egg Counts	39
2.5.3 Liveweights	45
2.5.4 Acceptance Of Medicated Nuts	51
2.6 Part 2: Adult Deer	52
2.7 Materials and Methods	54
2.7.1 Animals	54
2.7.2 Experimental Design	54
2.8 Statistical Analysis	54
2.9 Results	56
2.9.1 Faecal Larval Counts	56
2.9.2 Faecal Egg Counts	56
2.10 Discussion: Weaner Deer	56
2.10.1 Faecal Larval Counts	56
2.10.2 Faecal Egg Counts	60
2.10.3 Liveweights	62
2.10.4 General	64
2.11 Discussion: Adult Deer	65
2.12 Conclusions	65
CHAPTER 3: STUDY OF RESPONSES TO ANTHELMINTIC TREATMENT OF DEER ON A COMMERCIAL FARM	67
3.1 Introduction	67
3.2 Materials and Methods	67
3.2.1 Animals and Location	67
3.2.2 Timing	67
3.2.3 Allocation To Groups	68
3.2.4 Management	68
3.2.5 Sampling	68
3.3 Statistical Analysis	70
3.3.1 Faecal Larval and Egg Counts	70
3.3.2 Liveweight Data	70
3.4 Results	70
3.4.1 Faecal Larval Counts	70
3.4.2 Faecal Egg Counts	74
3.4.3 Liveweights	78
3.5 Discussion	78

	PAGE
3.5.1 Faecal Larval Counts	82
3.5.2 Faecal Egg Counts	85
3.5.3 Liveweights	86
3.6 Conclusions	87
CHAPTER 4: INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAECAL GASTROINTESTINAL NEMATODE EGG COUNTS AND GASTROINTESTINAL NEMATODE NUMBERS IN RED DEER	88
4.1 Introduction	88
4.2 Material and Methods	89
4.2.1 Specimens	89
4.2.2 Timing	89
4.2.3 Collection and Analytical Procedures	89
4.3 Statistical Method	91
4.4 Results	91
4.5 Discussion	98
4.6 Conclusions	103
CHAPTER 5: INVESTIGATION OF A POUR-ON LEVAMISOLE FORMULATION IN DEER	104
5.1 Introduction	104
5.2 Materials and Method	104
5.2.1 Deer	104
5.2.2 Timing	104
5.2.3 Experimental Groups	104
5.2.4 Management	105
5.2.5 Sampling Schedule	105
5.3 Statistical Analysis	105
5.4 Results	106
5.4.1 Faecal Larval Counts	106
5.4.2 Faecal Egg Counts	106
5.5 Discussion	111
5.6 Conclusions	113
BIBLIOGRAPHY	114



## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1.1 Species of nematode gastrointestinal and lung parasites reported in various species of deer in New Zealand, and reference indicated by the numeral.	2
2.1 Summary of statistical analyses performed on larval and egg counts and liveweights.	31
2.2 Individual lungworm larval counts/g faeces at each sampling, group 1.	33
2.3 Individual lungworm larval counts/g faeces at each sampling, group 2.	34
2.4 Individual lungworm larval counts/g faeces at each sampling, group 3.	
2.5 Mean ( $\pm$ Standard error) of $\log_{10}$ mean daily larval counts for pre-treatment, treatment and post-treatment periods.	38
2.6 Individual gastrointestinal egg counts/g faeces at each sampling, group 1.	40
2.7 Individual gastrointestinal egg counts/g faeces at each sampling, group 2.	41
2.8 Individual gastrointestinal egg counts/g faeces at each sampling, group 3.	42
2.9 Mean ( $\pm$ Standard error) of $\log_{10}$ mean daily egg counts for pre-treatment, treatment and post-treatment periods.	44
2.10 Individual liveweights (kg) at each sampling group 1.	46
2.11 Individual liveweights (kg) at each sampling group 2.	47
2.12 Individual liveweights (kg) at each sampling group 3.	48

TABLE	PAGE
2.13 Mean ( $\pm$ Standard error) of the mean daily growth rate (kg/day) in pre-treatment, treatment and post-treatment periods.	50
2.14 <u>D. viviparus</u> faecal larval counts (lpg) from 16 adult deer used in Part 2.	57
2.15 Gastrointestinal parasite faecal egg counts (epg) from 16 adult deer used in Part 2.	58
3.1 Schedule of anthelmintic treatments, faecal sampling and weighing during the trial period.	69
3.2 Faecal lungworm larval counts (lpg) from selected individuals in group 1.	71
3.3 Faecal lungworm larval counts (lpg) from selected individuals in group 2.	72
3.4 Faecal gastrointestinal egg counts (epg) from selected individuals in group 1.	75
3.5 Faecal gastrointestinal egg counts (epg) from selected individuals in group 2.	76
3.6 Liveweights (kg), and means of those deer which were available throughout the course of the study - group 1.	79
3.7 Liveweights (kg), and means of those deer which were available throughout the course of the study - group 2.	80
4.1 Egg count and worm data for all samples.	92
5.1 Individual <u>D. viviparus</u> faecal larval counts (lpg) and means before and after treatment with "Riporon", and in untreated controls.	107
5.2 Individual gastrointestinal nematode faecal egg counts (epg) and means before and after treatment with "Riporon", and in untreated controls.	109

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
2.1 Diagrammatic representation of experimental design.	25
2.2 Plan of Massey University Deer Unit showing location of experimental groups.	26
2.3 Experimental groups 2 and 3. Deer were fed deer nuts and set-stocked in temporary compounds constructed of sheep netting and one or two electrified tapes.	28
2.4 Arithmetic mean of faecal <u>D. viviparus</u> larval counts per gram of faeces, of the three experimental groups.	37
2.5 Mean of faecal gastrointestinal parasite egg counts per gram of faeces, of the three experimental groups.	43
2.6 Mean liveweights (kg) for each group at each weighing.	49
2.7 Individual faecal lungworm larval counts.	53
2.8 Diagrammatic summary of the experimental procedures for Part 2, adult deer.	55
3.1 Mean faecal lungworm larval counts for groups 1 and 2.	73
3.2 Mean faecal gastrointestinal nematode egg counts for groups 1 and 2.	77
3.3 Mean liveweights (kg) of males and females of groups 1 and 2.	81
4.1 Regression of the total worm count on the faecal egg count.	97
5.1 Mean lungworm faecal larval counts of treatment and control groups.	108
5.2 Mean gastrointestinal faecal egg counts of treatment and control groups.	110