

This is a very clear and well described overview of an important parasite. It needs in my opinion some more general and applied information to cover the potential audience of this article (e.g. clinical signs, diagnostics and some more details on the option for treatment – specifically anthelmintic).

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*Teladorsagia circumcincta* is a nematode that parasitises sheep and goats. It ~~was is~~ also previously known as *Ostertagia circumcincta* and colloquially refer to as ~~or~~ the brown stomach worm and is common in cool temperate areas, such as south-eastern and south-western Australia and the United Kingdom. *Teladorsagia davtiani* and *Teladorsagia trifurcata* are probably phenotypic variants (morphotypes) of *T. circumcincta*.<sup>[1]</sup> This parasite is responsible for huge considerable economic losses in sheep.<sup>[2][3][4]</sup>

Comment [VB1]: What about goats?

## Taxonomy<sup>[edit]</sup>

*Teladorsagia* is a member of the subfamily Ostertagiinae in the family Trichostrongylidae and the superfamily Trichostrongyloidea<sup>[5][6]</sup>. Other taxa that are members of the subfamily are *Ostertagia*, *Haemonchus* and *Graphidium* are closely related taxa that are usually assigned to separate subfamilies.

Comment [VB2]: Should start from phylum, class etc.

## Morphology<sup>[edit]</sup>

Adults are slender with a short buccal cavity and are ruddy brown in colour<sup>[7]</sup>. The average worm size varies considerably among sheep. Females range in size from 0.6 to 1.2 cm<sup>[8]</sup> with males typically about 20% smaller<sup>[7]</sup>.

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## Life cycle<sup>[edit]</sup>

The life cycle is relatively simple. Male and female adults breed on the abomasal surface. Eggs are passed in the faeces and develop through first (L1), second (L2) and third stage larvae (L3). Third stage larvae are unable to feed and are the infective stage. Following ingestion, third-stage larvae rapidly moult within 48 hours into fourth stage larvae (L4) which develop in the gastric glands of the abomasum. About 8 days after infection, the young adults emerge from the gastric glands, mature and breed. The prepatent period can be as short as 12 days and up to 21 days<sup>[9]</sup>. The number of eggs in the uterus of mature females can vary from less than 10 to more than 60<sup>[9]</sup> and is heavily dependent on the host immune response<sup>[10]</sup>. The number of eggs produced per day by an adult female worm has been estimated as ranging from 0 to approximately 350<sup>[10]</sup>. Longer females lay more eggs.

Comment [VB4]: Is it proven? Can you add a citation?

## Epidemiology<sup>[edit]</sup>

In most countries, infection resumes in the spring and is triggered by the production of large numbers of eggs by periparturient females<sup>[11]</sup>. The key trigger appears to be a relative protein deficiency in the ewe<sup>[12]</sup> and the periparturient rise can be prevented by feeding supplementary protein<sup>[9][13]</sup>. In the stereotypical pattern, egg production (assessed by faecal egg counts in the lambs) rises till midsummer then declines<sup>[14][15]</sup>. Nematode development is influenced by temperature and moisture and there is considerable variation among years in the pattern of egg production during the year<sup>[15]</sup>. The infection gradually dies down at the end of the season. The end of the season is likely to vary among countries depending upon their climate and is also likely to vary from year to year within countries depending upon local weather but is poorly documented. In Scotland, the season usually ends about late October.

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Comment [VB6]: Reduced? I don't think you can totally prevent it

There is considerable variation among animals in faecal egg counts<sup>[16]</sup> and much of this variation is genetic in origin<sup>[17]</sup>. The sources of variation are dynamic and their relative importance changes over the course of the year. Other sources of variation, apart from inherited effects include maternal and common environmental effects and effects specific to each individual,

Comment [VB7]: Rather than focusing on a specific area, can you give indication of temperature below which development is arrested (e.g. below 4°C)?

including variation in intake and non-additive genetic effects. The gender of the lamb, type of birth (single or twin), date of birth and intensity of early exposure to nematode infection have relatively minor but still important effects <sup>[16]</sup>. The inevitable variation between the observed count and the true faecal egg count also contributes to the observed variation <sup>[16]</sup>.

## Genetics<sup>[edit]</sup>

The heritability of a trait in the narrow sense is the proportion of inherited variation divided by the total variation <sup>[18]</sup>. It determines the response to selection <sup>[19]</sup>. Faecal egg count is widely used to identify and select animals that are relatively resistant to nematode infection <sup>[20][21][22]</sup>. Selection is most advanced in Australia and New Zealand where the dominant nematodes are *Haemonchus contortus* or a mixture of *T. circumcincta* and *Trichostrongylus colubriformis*.

For naturally infected Scottish Blackface lambs grazing fields contaminated with predominantly *T. circumcincta* eggs, the heritability of faecal egg count was not significantly different from zero for the first two months after birth then rose to approximately 0.3 at the end of the grazing season <sup>[17][23]</sup>. Similar heritability estimates were obtained for a flock of Texel sheep <sup>[24]</sup>. This heritability is similar to the heritability of growth rate in beef cattle and milk production in dairy cattle and indicates the feasibility of selective breeding for resistance to natural predominantly *T. circumcincta* infection <sup>[24]</sup>.

Genetic variation in faecal egg count in lambs following natural infection is predominantly due to genetic variation influencing worm size and fecundity rather than worm establishment and survival or larval inhibition <sup>[6]</sup>. Indeed, the heritability of adult female worm size, which is closely related to fecundity, has been estimated at 0.6 <sup>[6]</sup> whereas the heritability of worm number was only 0.14 <sup>[6]</sup>. The high heritability of worm size is one of the highest heritabilities known for a fitness related trait.

There has been a lot of effort devoted to identifying the causal polymorphisms that underlie resistance to infection <sup>[25][26]</sup>. Two genomic regions in particular have shown associations in a number of different studies: the *DRB1* locus of the major histocompatibility complex <sup>[27][28][29][30][31]</sup> and the interferon gamma locus <sup>[32]</sup>. Linkage disequilibrium in sheep is quite high compared to humans and the causative loci need not be in these regions but are probably in or around these regions. There are a number of regions which have shown suggestive (nearly but not quite statistically significant) associations in more than one study <sup>[26]</sup> and some of these are probably harbouring causal polymorphisms for nematode resistance.

Many of the putative candidate genes influence the immune response and genetic variation seems to predominantly influence immune responsiveness to infection. Although there are tantalising clues that other mechanisms may also contribute to genetic variation <sup>[33]</sup>.

## Immune responsiveness<sup>[edit]</sup>

There are two major manifestations of resistance to *T. circumcincta*: the regulation of worm growth and the control of worm establishment and survival. The regulation of worm size and fecundity is strongly and consistently associated with IgA activity especially against fourth-stage larvae <sup>[9][34][35]</sup>. This effect is so strong and consistent that it is likely causal because there is no other immunological mechanism that is so strongly associated with IgA activity. Eosinophil number is also associated with worm length and fecundity <sup>[36]</sup> and it is likely that eosinophils and IgA interact to influence worm growth and fecundity. Eosinophils have been implicated in resistance to infection to *Haemonchus contortus* <sup>[37][38]</sup>. Eosinophils play a much weaker role in resistance of mice to parasitic infections <sup>[39]</sup> but this may reflect the fact that mice eosinophils lack the IgA receptor <sup>[40]</sup>.

The other major mechanism of resistance to *T. circumcincta* is the IgE and mast cell mediated control of worm establishment and survival <sup>[9]</sup>. Again, this association is so strong and consistent that it is likely to be causal rather than acting as a marker for some other response. IgE activity against third-stage larvae seems to be most important <sup>[41][42]</sup>. The number of molecules recognised by IgE seems to be relatively small; two-dimensional Western blotting identified only 9 molecules

**Comment [VB8]:** Before this section, another one focusing on the diagnostic methods (explaining faecal egg count and other methods) should be added. Also, if the article is intended for general public (e.g. farmers, students), this section should be simplified and condensed

although there is evidence for at least two other allergens <sup>[43]</sup>. For comparison, 155 molecules were recognised by IgA on third-stage larvae <sup>[44]</sup>.

## Pathology [\[edit\]](#)

The immune response appears to be responsible for much of the pathology following nematode infection <sup>[45]</sup>. Immune suppression abolishes many of the clinical signs <sup>[46]</sup>.

Infection causes a relative protein deficiency that leads to reduced weight gain or even weight loss. This due in part to a reduction in appetite <sup>[47][48]</sup>. There is also a loss in digestive efficiency. Lesions in the epithelial barrier allow a loss of protein and in addition protein is diverted to tissue repair and immune and inflammatory processes. Protein supplementation of the diet can prevent the appearance of clinical signs <sup>[47][49]</sup> which argues strongly that pathogenesis is a consequence of the relative protein deficiency.

Following infection, there is a breakdown of the mucosal barrier which is a consequence of mast cell degranulation releasing a serine protease mast cell protease II that digests occludin and claudin in the tight junctions between epithelial cells <sup>[45]</sup>. Many of the **clinical-pathological lesions signs** such as epithelial hyperplasia, increased pH in the abomasum **and** **-pepsinogaemia and anorexia** are a consequence of repair processes triggered by the binding of epithelial growth factor in saliva to receptors on the internal surface of epithelial cells <sup>[45]</sup>. Prolonged and sustained infection subverts the repair process into a pathogenic **mechanism**.

## Mathematical modelling [\[edit\]](#)

A number of groups have modelled the infection process ranging from descriptive to semi-mechanistic to almost entirely mechanistic models <sup>[50][51][52][53]</sup>. These models can test the hypotheses arising from natural and deliberate infections <sup>[54]</sup> and suggest potential strategies for the control of infections <sup>[1][53][54][55]</sup>.

## The control of infection [\[edit\]](#)

The methods to control nematode infection in livestock can be grouped into 6 categories <sup>[56][57]</sup>: Anthelmintic treatment, grazing management, biological control, nutritional supplementation, vaccination and genetic resistance. Each method has its advantages and disadvantages. Anthelmintic treatment is cheap, simple and effective but is threatened by the development of drug resistance in parasite populations <sup>[58]</sup>. Grazing management is **cheap, simple and widely used** but is seldom very effective in isolation and can be impractical <sup>[59]</sup>. Biological control with the fungus *Duddingtonia flagrans* has recently been licensed in Australia and can be very effective <sup>[60]</sup> but requires regular, possibly daily, feeding. Nutritional supplementation can eliminate clinical signs but **can be very expensive** <sup>[61]</sup>. There is currently no completely reliable vaccine but great progress is being made <sup>[62]</sup>. Genetic resistance includes the use of relatively resistant breeds such as the Texel <sup>[29]</sup>, cross-breeding and selective breeding. Selective breeding can be very effective <sup>[22]</sup> and almost completely eliminate the need for anthelmintic treatment but requires specialist expertise. Most experts feel that a combination of control methods will be more effective and sustainable. However, the most effective combination of control methods may vary from farm to farm and require specialist expertise to design and implement.

## Additional information [\[edit\]](#)

### Acknowledgements [\[edit\]](#)

Any people, organisations, or funding sources that you would like to thank.

**Comment [VB9]:** This section would be better straight after epidemiology and should be called Pathology and clinical signs

**Comment [VB10]:** Here an expansion on the clinical signs (e.g. reduced appetite, poor growth performances, weight loss, diarrhoea etc.) should be added. A paragraph/sentence on the economics and the effect on production would also be beneficial

**Comment [VB11]:** After this section, one briefly outlining anthelmintic resistance should be added, with mention on the difference between whole flock methaphylactic treatments and targeted selective treatments. Also a brief overview of the 5 classes of anthelmintics available should be outlined

**Comment [VB12]:** It's not. Farmers argue all the time it takes too much of their time and most (in Scotland at least) won't do it.

**Comment [VB13]:** And also impractical

## Competing interests<sup>[edit]</sup>

Any conflicts of interest that you would like to declare. Otherwise, a statement that the authors have no competing interest.

## Ethics statement<sup>[edit]</sup>

An ethics statement, if appropriate, on any animal or human research performed should be included here or in the methods section.

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