

Neospora in Cattle

Abortions are starting to be seen, so it is an apt time to be looking at some of the causes. Let's start with Neospora.

Transmission

Vertical transmission of Neospora to the calf in-utero is the major mode of infection whereas horizontal infection (via ingestion of oocysts excreted by dogs) is minor. Cows infected with neospora remain infected for life and may show recrudescence of infection during subsequent pregnancies.

Once infected dogs transiently excrete low numbers of oocysts, however, infection is life-long and relapses in shedding can occur.

Clinical Presentation

Infected cows do not show clinical signs other than abortion or giving birth to a dead, deformed or clinically normal calf. Abortions can occur from 3 months to term, however, usually occur between 5 and 7 months.

Clinically normal, congenitally infected calves remain persistently infected for life and may abort during their pregnancies. Infection can be maintained over several generations through vertical transmission.

Diagnosis

Infected cows typically show a positive result on serology. However, a positive serological result doesn't necessarily indicate that neospora is the cause for an abortion, Similarly, the presence of *N. caninum*-DNA in an aborted fetus does not conclusively indicate that it is the cause for the abortion. Histology of the fetus looking for consistent lesions is required to confirm that neospora is the cause.

