Bladder Worm (Cysticercus tenuicollis) in sheep is the larval stage of the dog tapeworm, Taenia hydatigena. It is sometimes called the "false hydatid".

Abattoir meat inspectors detect:
1. Tracts in the liver from migrating larvae (Figure 1)
2. Fluid filled sacs ('bladders'), usually on the liver or on other organs in the abdomen. Cysts can be very large, up to 6cm (Figure 2)
3. White scars on the liver surface – these are remnants of old cysts and may be hard and calcified (Figure 3).

**Economic Consequences**

**On Farm**
There are usually no consequences for the health of the sheep. Some production losses may occur and, although rare, sudden death can occur due to severe liver damage or secondary bacterial infection.

**At the Abattoir**
- **Trimming** (liver/abdomen) – if individual cysts are detected.
- **Liver Condemnation** – if multiple cysts are present or the line is significantly affected.

**How Do Sheep Get Bladder Worm?**
Bladder worm occurs when sheep ingest tapeworm eggs from contaminated pastures.

For the completion of the parasite’s life cycle two hosts are required. Different stages of the parasite life cycle occur in each of the following hosts:

1. **An 'intermediate (sheep) host'** - or goat/cattle/pigs
   - Sheep are infested when they graze pasture contaminated with fox/dog/dingo tapeworm eggs.

2. **A 'definitive (dog/fox/dingo) host'**
   - Dogs, foxes and dingos are infested when they eat raw offal containing cysts.
   - In the dog/fox/dingo the tapeworm lives in the intestines and produces eggs that are passed out in faeces, contaminating pastures.
What Might Be Seen On Farm?
Bladder worm rarely causes disease on farm but can occasionally cause death by triggering black disease.

Black disease is a clostridial (bacterial) disease triggered by immature parasites migrating through the liver. This migration causes liver damage which stimulates the activation of Clostridium novyi spores in unvaccinated or incompletely vaccinated sheep. The disease results in sudden death as the clostridial spores produce a lethal toxin. Black disease is also seen in sheep with liver fluke.

Treatment
There is no treatment for bladder worm, control is based on breaking the life cycle.

Prevention
1. Worm your dog/s
   - Worm all dogs on the property with a tapewormer containing the active ingredient Praziquantel.
   - Consider worming monthly, as although the bladder worm life cycle takes 10-12 weeks to complete, the sheep measles life cycle (caused by another dog tapeworm) is 35 days. It is very common to see these conditions together. Worming monthly is not dangerous to your dog and is recommended to control sheep measles.
   - Worm all farm dogs and ensure any dogs coming onto the property are appropriately wormed within the last month – including those belonging to shearmers, livestock transporters, contractors, friends or family who visit, and retired working dogs and pets.
   - Ensure you dose according to the weight of the dog. Every three months swap the tapewormer for an all-wormer also containing praziquantel – this will ensure your dogs are protected against other important worms.

2. Don’t allow dogs to eat sheep or goat meat
   - Home killing of sheep/goats should be carried out in a dog proof enclosure.
   - Raw sheep or goat meat/offal should not be fed to dogs, instead feed commercial dry dog food (freezing or cooking may not reliably kill all cysts).
   - Prevent dogs from scavenging or roaming – when not working tie up dogs or keep in a run or kennel.
   - Clean up and dispose of dead animals quickly and effectively to prevent scavenging of carcasses.

Remember that after initiating prevention strategies it is common to see bladder worm on abattoir reports for some time. This is because, once infected, cysts and/or scarred remnants are present for life. Control is achieved with time and persistence.

For Further Information
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