

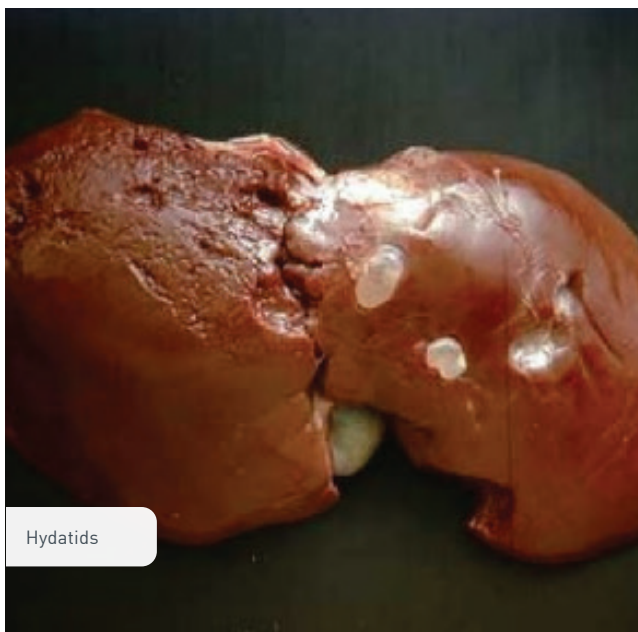
HYDATIDS

KEY MESSAGES

1. Offal affected by hydatids is condemned and costs the cattle industry millions of dollars.
2. Hydatids is also a serious condition that can affect humans when the tapeworm eggs are ingested.

What are hydatids?

Hydatids are the large cysts from the dog tapeworm, *Echinococcus granulosus*. Their importance is due to the condemnation of organs at abattoirs and more importantly the risk to people due to the accidental ingestion of eggs.



Source: MINTRAC

Disease on farm

The prevalence of hydatids varies around the country; areas like Tasmania and South Australia have little or no hydatid disease while other states tend to have regions often associated with poor control in farm dogs, or the presence of wild dogs and to a lesser extent, foxes. A recent study at an Australian abattoir found significant production losses in affected cattle processed (16.8 kg lighter than unaffected cattle). The hydatid tapeworm itself is very small, (~6mm) and causes no clinical signs in dogs. It is highly unlikely that you will see any evidence that your dog is infected with hydatid tapeworms.

Disease picture at the abattoir

The disease tends to occur in some areas often associated with circulation in wildlife, which can lead to significant prevalence in some lines. Affected organs are condemned and this can lead to significant offal losses for the processor.

Hydatid disease in people

People do not become infected by eating beef or offal contaminated with hydatid cysts. They can become infected by the accidental ingestion of eggs passed by adult hydatid tapeworms in dogs. Human infection most commonly occurs when infested dogs are handled due to the sticky eggs being present on the coat of the dog. Children are more commonly affected due to their close association with dogs and poor hygiene. Cysts may locate in many organs in the body including the brain and major surgery is the only treatment to remove them.

Treatment

There is no available treatment for affected cattle. Treatment and prevention of domestic dogs becoming infested is the basis of protecting cattle and people from infection.

Prevention

Prevention is aimed at breaking the life cycle by ensuring dogs are no longer being infested and if they are, that the hydatid tapeworms are killed before they reach an egg producing stage.

These will also be controlled by following the control program for hydatids:

- Worm all farm and house dogs monthly with a wormer that contains the active ingredient praziquantel or a label claim for hydatid tapeworms. This also should apply to all visiting dogs with hunters or contractors.
- Feed commercial packaged dog food to dogs and don't feed or allow access to offal.
- Secure dogs at night to stop scavenging and remove access to carcasses.

Practice good hygiene, by ensuring that everyone including children wash their hands thoroughly following contact with dogs and especially before eating.

What to expect from a prevention program

If you start a control program based on management changes and monthly worming of dogs it may take a year before existing viable eggs on pasture die. Cattle remain infested for life so once the lifecycle has been broken it may take many years to turn over the herd and remove the last infested animals.

Wildlife cycles of infection do exist in some areas, due to infestation of wild dogs/dingos and kangaroos, and to a lesser extent foxes. Control of foxes and wild dogs will help reduce the level of infestation, but it is more difficult to control the disease than when only farm dogs are involved in the life cycle.

Where on farm eradication is impossible due to wildlife hosts, it is still essential to use preventative practices in farm dogs to minimise the chances of humans becoming infected.

