What is husk?
Husk is a common parasitic infection of the lungs caused by the worm *Dictyocaulus viviparous*. Cattle develop husk after eating grass or forage containing infective lungworm larvae. Once in the animal’s gut the larvae migrate through the gut wall. Over the next few weeks the larvae reach the lungs and mature into egg laying adults. The presence of adult worms in the lungs causes inflammation and damage giving rise to the signs described below.

changing pattern of disease?
Traditionally a disease of calves, particularly after weaning in late summer/ autumn due to high levels of larvae on the pasture at this time, however:

- Data has shown that although the number of reported out-breaks has remained fairly steady, over the last decade there has been a distinct increase in the number out-breaks in adult cattle.
- The warmer, wetter winters of recent years have lead to an increase in severe disease in early winter as the larvae are active on the pasture for longer.

Clinical Signs
- Range from mild cough with slightly increased breathing rate, to
- Severe, persistent coughing, with marked difficulty in breathing and even death.
- Reduced weight gains, or weight loss
- Reduced milk yields

Diagnosis
- Clinical signs can be highly suggestive of husk, however, similar signs may be seen with other lung diseases, especially viral/bacterial pneumonia, so veterinary advice should be sought.

- If any deaths have occurred, a post mortem examination can be very useful.

In live animals:

- Dung samples maybe examined for larvae; however their absence doesn’t rule disease out.
Lungworm Disease in Cattle
(Husk or Parasitic Bronchitis)

TREATMENT and PREVENTION

Treatment

• It is essential you discuss the appropriate treatment with your vet; many modern
wormers are effective against lungworm.

• Severely affected animals should be given antibiotic cover.

Prevention

Husk is a much less predictable disease than that caused by gut worms and requires a different approach to control. Husk will not be controlled by a dose and move strategy.

There are two strategies for controlling lungworm:

1) Vaccination - by far the most effective way to control husk
2) Suppression with regular worming

Vaccination

• Best and most effective control method as it combats unpredictable nature of
disease outbreaks
  Made from irradiated larvae incapable of causing disease, two dose given orally
  3-6 weeks apart,
• Dairy calves: vaccination should finish at least 2 weeks prior to turn out.
• Beef calves: vaccination should finish before they begin to eat much grass.
• Despite being very effective some larvae will develop and reach the pasture in
  low levels so it must be remembered that any non vaccinated animals remain at
  risk
• Sustained release wormers should not be used until two weeks after the final
dose of vaccine.