

BLACKLEG (CLOSTRIDIUM CHAUVOEI)



Source: Jowel et al., 2016

CAUSES

The *C. chauvoei* bacteria produces spores, which cause severe and often fatal muscle damage.

Inactive spores are common in the environment and can exist within the intestines of cattle. They convert to active bacteria and multiply in the muscles of affected animals, often after muscle injury.

Disease tends to occur seasonally, especially in warm, wet months.

BLACKLEG, CAUSED BY *C. CHAUVOEI*, OCCURS MOST OFTEN IN YOUNG FAST-GROWING ANIMALS AT 3 -24 MONTHS OF AGE.

CLINICAL SIGNS

- Causes swelling and gas accumulation in muscles.
- Large muscles of the legs, back, and neck often affected, resulting in lameness.
- Difficulty breathing if tongue and throat muscles affected.
- Sudden death if heart or diaphragm muscles affected.
- Mortality rate is high.
- Post-mortem findings: visible muscle damage that has a metallic, dry reddish-black. May have a sweet smell.



***C. CHAUVOEI* IS CONSIDERED A CORE VACCINE AND SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN YOUR HERD'S VACCINATION PROGRAM.**

TREATMENT

Treatment is only successful in the very early stages of disease, with high doses of antimicrobials, supportive care, and surgical removal of damaged muscle, if possible.

VACCINATION

C. chauvoei is considered a **core vaccine**, so it should be included in every herd's vaccination program ([See Core Vaccine Guidelines - Clostridial Vaccines](#)).

Cattle that have not been previously vaccinated or have unknown vaccine history should be given a booster series (i.e., 2 vaccines, 3-6 weeks apart), as per label directions. Cattle that have been previously vaccinated should be re-vaccinated annually.

Calves should be vaccinated at 2 or more of the following times: spring processing (or branding), 3-6 weeks before weaning, and/or weaning, as per label directions. Two vaccines should be given 3-6 weeks apart.

PREVENTATIVE MANAGEMENT

Low-stress cattle handling, to reduce the risk of bruising and muscle injury, is important.



Source: University of Saskatchewan

