



Be vigilant!

This warm weather is gently easing us out of the late Summer period and into Autumn. As we enter the Autumn and tugging is underway, be vigilant and aware of the following challenges facing our flocks:

- **Fluke risk** – the risk of liver fluke in the Central region of the UK is expected to be **low to moderate**.
In Wales, Western Scotland and the North West it is expected to be **high risk**.

Here in Gloucestershire we fall into Central and Western areas and our experience is that we have areas within the practice that appear to suffer from liver fluke more so than others.

This does make it difficult to offer advice that fits all farms and therefore this is where it is important to have a specific fluke treatment plan as part of your flock health plan.

In general – if you have a history of fluke problems on the farm or on certain areas or parcels of land, it is advisable that you treat for fluke from mid to late October.

Avoid the risk – If possible, avoid grazing the wetter, low lying or higher risk areas where fluke has been a problem.

What to use?? The only drug to use from now until December is **TRICLABENDAZOLE** i.e. Fasinex, Tribex, Triclafas. This is the only drug that will treat young immature fluke. There is continued confusion about which drug to use for fluke and so hopefully this will make it clear for this time of the season.

Replacements - Think about where your replacements are coming from and as part of the quarantine protocol make sure that they are treated for fluke. If they are arriving around now, then triclabendazole is the drug to use.

High worm burden alert – larval challenge from the pasture remains very high and high worm egg count and hence adult worm burdens are continuing to be a problem. Remaining fat lambs and store lambs need careful management as the majority will now be grazing 'dirty' high challenge pasture and growth rates will suffer despite effective worming treatments.

This is why 'tack grazing away from the farm is useful as it provides cleaner grazing on which to finish or store the lambs. Moving lambs away or selling as stores will also free up essential grazing for the ewes to help with tugging and gaining condition.

How is the best way to get a muck sample for testing?

There are a number of steps to go through when testing a muck sample for worm eggs. This number of steps can inadvertently affect the accuracy of the results and so it is crucial that all efforts are taken to be accurate at each step. This starts with collecting the sample.

If you want to test a group of sheep, the general rule is that you need samples from 10% of the flock. i.e. samples from 10 different sheep pats out of a group of 100 sheep.

A sample is a 'thumb nail sized' amount from a sheep pat. These can be collected and all placed in the same pot/bag unless you have been instructed otherwise.

Make sure that you sample a representative sample – i.e. do not target the scouring poorer lambs, UNLESS this is representative of the group.

Then make sure that you **LABEL** the sample with the date of sampling, age of sheep i.e. lambs and then fill out the form at reception with as much history as possible, i.e. reason for sampling.

Don't mix lambs and ewe samples together and this will give us false results - they need to be separate. They need testing as soon as possible or if you can't get them in straight away then they can be stored in a cool DARK place.

Sheep scab in bought in replacements

We know from the latest research around sheep scab that it's presence within a flock or on individuals can remain 'hidden' for a number of months. This is due to a level of sheep immunity that can suppress the sheep scab population on individual sheep until conditions favour the mite population to develop. This is commonly seen in Autumn and Winter where the fleece has grown back and skin/fleece environmental conditions favour mite development.



This is why:

- **Quarantine/isolation** for as long as possible will allow infections to be detected before mixing with the home flock.
- Why you can't tell just by looking at a group of sheep whether or not they are affected.
- Why injecting with either Moxidectin 1 or 2% or dipping the sheep with OP is an **ESSENTIAL** part of your buying in procedure. There are other options depending upon your farm specific factors so discuss with us if you are unsure

Blue tongue virus risk

The virus does not appear to have reached the region of Northern France as was expected earlier in the year. Therefore, the risk, whilst still present may be later than predicted and depends

somewhat on when infection reaches this region in France. The advice is still to be extra vigilant to any clinical signs and report them to us at the practice if you are unsure.

How to achieve a successful lambing %

Using a raddle marker or paint on a ram will enable you to tell if the ewes are returning at the next cycle, i.e. **fertilisation failed**. This is an essential part of management as it will affect feeding, vaccination timing and labour at lambing time.

If you have noticed that ewes have returned and been re raddle marked, then the ram/rams used must be questioned. We can test the semen of a suspect ram to determine whether he has a problem and potentially prevent the same problem happening next time –contact the surgery for more info if needed.

What to expect: 98% of the flock should be pregnant after 2 cycles (34 days).

Implantation of the fertilised embryo within the uterus occurs at around day 19 after mating.

Failure to implant will result in the loss of the embryo, i.e. a barren ewe or reduced litter size if just one embryo is lost.

This can be caused by:

- **Stress** from handling or gathering in the immediate post mating period (i.e. 30-40 days after tugging).
- **Prolonged stress** e.g. from wet weather, transport
- **Inflammatory disease** – sheep scab, liver fluke, lameness.
- Severe under nutrition.
- Selenium or Iodine deficiency
- Toxoplasmosis or Border disease

The effects of these issues will be seen as a high barren rate at scanning or lambing and definitely needs investigation to prevent reductions in flock productivity and profitability