



THE
WOOD
VETERINARY
GROUP



SHEEP NEWSLETTER
APRIL 2023

Watch out for Nematodirus!

Nematodirosis can cause severe disease in lambs grazing infective pastures. Infective pastures are any areas of pasture that held lambs in the spring last year. Differently to other parasites the development of infective larvae occurs quickly and infection spreads from last years lambs to this years through overwintered larvae. Having been exposed to low levels, lambs do produce a good immune response and so the disease does not affect older sheep. Nematodirus typically strikes after a prolonged period of cold weather then a sudden warm spell of >10 degrees Celsius.

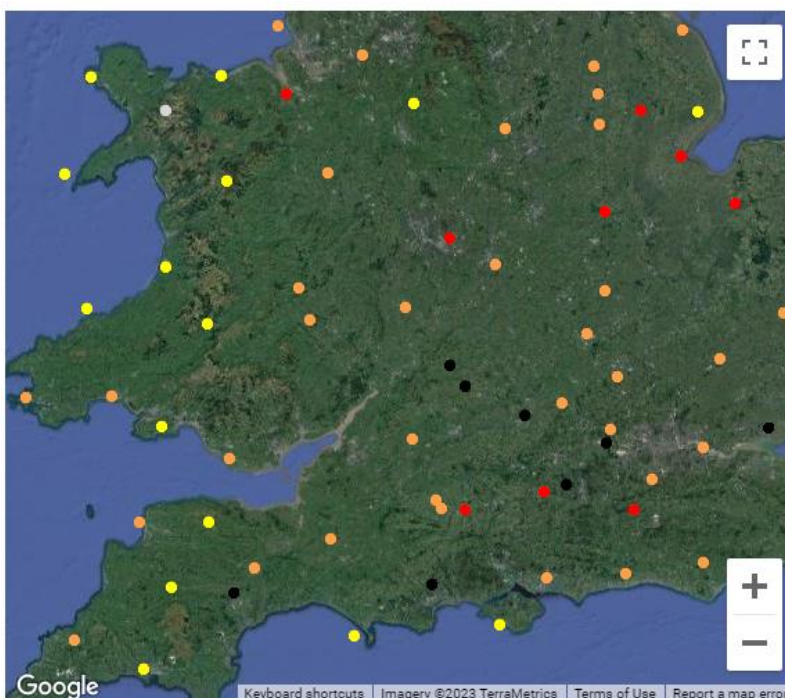
Warning signs in lambs:

- Scouring lambs (green watery scour)
- Seeing lambs drinking from puddles/ditches
- Sudden death

Risk factors:

- Lambs that are grazing pasture that was grazed by lambs in spring last year
- Old enough to be eating sufficient grass to cause disease (i.e. 4-6 weeks+)
- Lambs that are under other stressors which would cause them to be eating more grass and drinking less milk (i.e. triplets, yearling ewes, mastitis in ewes)
- Nematodirus can occur concurrently with coccidiosis

The SCOPS nematodirus forecast is a very useful tool which can be used to monitor your lambs risk to nematodirus.



Risk at a Glance

Each dot on the map represents a weather station. Zoom in on the map and click on the weather station closest to you - but **read more below** on how the information relates to your holding.

- Negligible Risk
- Low Risk
- Moderate Risk
- High Risk
- Very High Risk

The image above is a snapshot of the Nematodirus forecast. The most up to date forecast can be found on <https://www.scops.org.uk/forecasts/nematodirus-forecast/>. The current risk for the majority of Gloucestershire is moderate – very high risk.

The hatch date is predicated by temperature and so the forecast map is a very handy tool to use, but other factors must also be considered when assessing risk as this will be different, even from field to field. Factors such as altitude will alter risk; every increase in 100m will delay hatching by 7 days. Furthermore, hatching will occur earlier on south facing fields.

Treatment/Prevention:

A faecal egg count is not useful for Nematodirus as the disease is caused by the young larvae (before adults develop and therefore before eggs are produced in the faeces). If possible, move lambs off risky fields during the risk periods and move onto clean pasture or new leys.

Treatment is based around the use of a white drench as it remains highly effective for Nematodirus.

Drenching must be timed for when hatching is expected to occur in the age group that are ingesting sufficient grass at the same time. As the drench doesn't have any persistence, working on just that day, timing is key.

Coccidiosis in lambs

Coccidiosis is another disease of lambs that can cause scouring and ill thrift and is typically seen as outbreaks in lambs 3 - 8 weeks old. Infection can be picked up from the ewes shedding onto pasture, where the parasite then multiplies within young lambs and builds up in areas with a high stocking density. Ewes are immune to disease and some ewes may produce a lot more coccidiosis parasite than other ewes. Again coccidiosis can overwinter for several seasons so turnout paddocks will be heavily contaminated.

There are many species of coccidiosis in the UK, and some are a lot more harmful than others. Bring in faeces samples if you have scouring lambs, or have had coccidiosis in your lambs previously. It is very important to confirm if you do or do not have a problem with coccidiosis on farm, not only because the treatment is expensive but so you can be prepared for next year to prevent the disease.

Reducing risk:

- Reducing stocking density where possible and rotate turnout paddocks
- Keeping indoor pens well bedded
- Moving field furniture frequently (every day)
- Incorporating new leys into a grazing rotation (ploughing should bury the coccidiosis parasite, however direct drilling into the same pasture or cultivating the top will not significantly reduce the number of coccidiosis parasites on the ground)



MSD Flock check scheme

We hope everyone is having/had a successful lambing period! However, if you did experience >2% abortion rate or had more than 2-3 ewes abort over a couple of days, then the MSD flock check scheme may be helpful to you. MSD are sponsoring blood testing for ewes to detect exposure to Enzootic abortion and Toxoplasmosis. They will subsidise the blood sampling of 6 - 8 unvaccinated ewes which aborted, were barren or had weakly lambs. This scheme will run until 30th of June 2023 so get in touch with us at the practice if you would like to take advantage of this service.

Results from the 2022 scheme showed that 75% of the 374 sheep farms tested were exposed to Toxoplasmosis and 18% to Enzootic abortion, and so Toxoplasmosis and Enzootic abortion remain the highest causes of sheep abortion.



Wood Vets Farm Team



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