



THE
**WOOD
VETERINARY
GROUP**

SHEEP NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2024



Unfortunately, it looks like we may be set for another wet winter and with that comes wet ground and a whole lot of mud! Mud carries risks for both lameness and liver fluke and so this month's newsletter focuses on these two topics

Keep on top of lameness – follow the 5 Point Plan:

1. CULL PERSISTENT OFFENDERS

- 🐑 Cull ewes who suffer with 2 or 3 lameness incidences in a season as they are very likely to be a carrier of infection, increasing the burden on the ground.
- 🐑 There's also the possibility that these sheep are genetically more predisposed to lameness through foot shape and resistance to infection so be strict!

2. AVOID SPREAD

- 🐑 Move feeders/racks/licks daily and apply lime and woodchip around poached areas
- 🐑 Consider footbathing after reading our Do's and Don'ts

Foot Bathing - Do's and Don'ts



Taken from www.fairfarms.com

Many of you may be aware of the 5 point plan for lameness control. Footbathing is one way we can reduce disease challenge. However, if done incorrectly it can actually do more harm than good. Here are some top tips for success....

- ✓ 1) **DO** use it for the right reasons....
 - Use as a disinfection rather than a lameness cure....it is indicated for outbreaks of scald or as quarantine treatment when bringing new or old stock back onto farm.
 - When gathering a group of sheep in a confined area, e.g. scanning/shearing then utilise footbaths as a means of disinfection
- ✓ 2) **DO** use it correctly...
 - Use a pre-wash footbath of water to clean feet and remove organic matter which can deactivate the chemicals used (formalin particularly)
 - Use either 10% zinc sulphate or 3% formalin
 - Mix to the correct concentration with the correct volume of water and change frequently following instructions!
 - Ensure contact time is correct! Zinc sulphate requires 15-30 mins standing submerged whereas formalin is a walk through...
- ✓ 3) **DO** allow time for feet to dry
 - At least 20 minutes on hard clean ground
- ✗ 4) **DON'T** use copper sulphate- it's TOXIC!
- ✗ 5) **DON'T** use footbaths for cases of CODD or severe Footrot
 - This is very painful and these cases require injectable antibiotics and pain relief instead

3. TREAT QUICKLY

- 🐑 Identify and treat lameness within 48 hours – speak to us about protocols for each lameness cause
- 🐑 Mark and record the leg affected so we know if the case is new or a repeat of a previous case

4. VACCINATE

- 👤 Consider FootVax vaccination. This needs to be timed carefully to maximise the impact and when it is safe to do so

5. QUARANTINE

- 👤 Sheep should always be sourced from farms with strict lameness protocols.
- 👤 Examine feet before purchase and always quarantine incomers away from your flock for at least 4 weeks. Use pasture that is not needed by the main flock for the rest of the season to avoid spreading new strains through your flock.

Liver Fluke – New Diagnostics!

As you know, typical weather patterns in the UK are changing which means that parasite patterns are also changing so it is harder to predict when certain parasites are going to be about. The risk of fluke is farm specific, and even field specific, and as anecdotal evidence of resistance to flukicides (the medicines we use to kill fluke) has been reported in the UK, it is very important to perform diagnostic testing to ensure we are using the right product at the right time. As sheep have small livers, they do not tolerate fluke very well at all and clinical signs of liver fluke include anaemia, lethargy, weight loss and bottle jaw. The disease progresses very rapidly and usually ewes are found dead before there is the chance to treat them, hence why fluke control and prevention is key!

Diagnostics could include:

- 👤 **Blood testing this year's lambs once a month** (from August onwards) for fluke antibodies. The presence of antibodies in the blood show that the lambs have been exposed to fluke and so there is a risk present and hence the need to treat.
- 👤 **A faecal test can also be used in ewes which identifies coproantigen produced by late immature fluke.**
- 👤 **NEW! Sheep side rapid antibody tests.** These are similar to the Covid lateral flow tests and are a brand new diagnostic. They are a quick and easy way to monitor fluke burdens in your flock. Look out for more information in next months newsletter or speak to us for more information.
- 👤 **Post mortem** on fallen stock will give a definitive diagnosis of all stages of fluke infection – but obviously we don't want to get to that point

Treatment decision depends on the time of year and weather as different products target different fluke stages. Triclabendazole in sheep is effective against flukes aged 2 weeks and over so should be used in the Autumn/Early Winter (dependent on risk on farm). Closantel is effective against flukes aged 6 weeks plus and so should be used in Late Winter/Early Spring. No flukicide has any persistency, meaning it only kills on the day of treatment and no longer, so it is encouraged that sheep are moved to clean, low fluke risk pasture after treatment.

Minimising fluke exposure is paramount so try to avoid grazing wet pastures as much as possible and fence off natural water courses. If you do have paddocks with ponds and streams etc then aim to graze these in Summer instead when the fluke risk is low.

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Worm burdens are still high – continue to WEC your lambs

As the weather has been so mild and wet for this time of year, we are still seeing VERY high worm burdens in lambs. Although it's late in the worm season, we still recommend 4 weekly worm egg counts to monitor your grazing lambs.



Wood Vets Farm Team



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