

GALEDIN VETERINARY Farm Newsletter

June 2025



| SHEEP WORMING | BLUETONGUE | HEIFERS | MALIGNANT CATARRHAL FEVER |

Sheep Worming Katie Stimpson BVM&S MRCVS

Below, find six key areas to focus on with regards to worming of sheep. The dry spring has perhaps delayed the worm season but high burdens are being seen in lambs already this year.

Effective dosing

Dose for the heaviest in the group and always check the dose rate. Calibrate the dosing gun using the product to be used, rather than water, as this will be more accurate. For oral dosing ensure the nozzle is fully over the back of the tongue - if the product is given just in the mouth in lambs it can trigger the oesophageal groove mechanism meaning the rumen is bypassed and the drug may not work effectively.

Preserve susceptible worms

'Move then dose' and 'dose, delay then move' methods aim to keep a population of susceptible worms on the pasture, whilst controlling worm burdens, and minimising development of resistant populations by providing competition. Some of the group should be left untreated to maintain a population of susceptible worms - 10% is suggested but you can build up to this amount, or leave more untreated if suitable. Choose animals which have resilience (maintain condition despite higher burden) or resistance (low worm burdens). You can use body condition scoring, weight and faecal consistency to help guide selection.

Using an appropriate anthelmintic

Which product to give when and to who is very farm specific so should be discussed with your vet. Any suspected resistance s hould be investigated. Post-drench faecal egg counts can be used to assess the efficacy of the treatment used, with resistance sus pected if egg counts do not reduce by at least 90%. A more detailed investigation is a faecal egg count reduction test (FECRT) which is us ed to assess several different anthelmintics, as different products are given to different treatment groups. Repeat tests may be needed as resistance patterns can vary according to which species of worms are present at different times of the year. If you are concerned about resistance on your farm please speak to one of us about an appropriate investigation plan.

Quarantine

Assume that all incoming sheep could be carrying resistant worms, and administer an anthelmintic on arrival into quarantine. Choice of product will be farm-specific, but the newer classes (4 and 5) are often used as these have the lowest levels of resistance. Sheep should be kept off pasture for 48 hours as after this 99% of eggs will have passed out in the faeces. They should then go onto contaminated pasture so any remaining eggs are diluted into the current population.

Treatment timing

Pre-mating treatment is only necessary in immature or lean sheep. Ewes immunity drops around lambing so a dose is often given around this time, in part to minimise the contamination of the pasture for the incoming lambs. However this may not be necessary in healthy adult ewes in good body condition with adequate protein. Only the poorer ewes should be treated, with at least 10% left untreated. Lambs require some exposure to worms to develop protective immunity, which is especially important in those retained for breeding. The SCOPS nematodirus forecast helps identify high risk periods when treatment may be required. Resistance to 1-BZ group is uncommon in nematodirus so this can often still be used. Treatments should not be routinely given without using FECs as guidance, or if there are clinical signs of disease.

Group	Example drug(s)
1-BZ benzimidazole	Albendazole, fenbendazole
2-LV levamisole	Levamisole
3-ML macrocyclic lactones	Ivermectin, doramectin, moxidectin
4-AD amino-acetonitrile derivatives	Monepantel
5-SI spiroindoles	Derquantel Only available in combination with 3-ML abamectin (Startect)

Pasture management

Well-conditioned older ewes with good immunity can be used to reduce pasture contamination, but this can be variable and is ineffective for Nematodirus as the infective larvae remain in eggs in the soil until the following spring. A rotational/paddock system means there is less time for contamination to build up, however FECs and weather forecasts should be used to avoid susceptible animals being put onto pasture when there is a peak of egg hatching. In all pasture systems mapping of suspected level of pasture contamination based on grazing history and FECs is useful. Hatching of eggs increases in warm, wet weather so forecasts can be used to predict which pastures may become higher risk.

Remember to use the **right product**, at the **correct dose**, only **when necessary** and through **calibrated equipment**. Speak to us to develop a parasite control plan appropriate for your farm.

How are your heifers looking?

First calved heifers may need supplementary feeding to maintain their condition and conceive again. They may also need a worming dose but this should be based on faecal egg count results.

Another group to consider is any late calved cows and those rearing twins. These animals are also at higher risk of missing the mating period with a delayed return to oestrus. Using a synchronisation programme with or without artificial insemination can give these cows the best chance of calving again next year.

With delayed turnout due to grass growth (or lack of!), cow body condition should be monitored carefully up to, during and after bulling.



Malignant Catarrhal Fever

Malignant Catarrhal Fever (MCF) is generally a sporadic disease of cattle but occasionally can cause outbreaks and, anecdotally, we are seeing more of this disease now than previously. MCF can

cause significant problems in farmed deer.



Some of the signs of MCF are similar to Bluetongue and Foot and Mouth Disease so further testing is often undertaken to confirm or there may be a conversation with APHA about the clinical signs. In the UK, MCF in cattle is caused by Ovine herpesvirus-2 (OvHV-2) and OvHV-2 infects most sheep throughout their lives without causing clinical disease.

The most common clinical signs in cattle include:

- high fever
- enlarged lymph nodes
- mucopurulent discharge from eyes & nose
 - lesions in the mouth and muzzle
- Inflammation
- cloudiness of the eyes
- sometimes diarrhoea

MCF in cattle is almost always fatal. It is proposed that managing sheep and cattle separately may minimise the risk of disease however there is the potential for spread through watercourses and contaminated feed and bedding.

Bluetongue Fact Check

There is unfortunately some misinformation circulating regarding Bluetongue. If you have any questions regarding the disease please do not hesitate to contact your farm vet. A few points are clarified below.

- Bluetongue is spread by midges. It can also be spread by infected semen and through the placenta. It is **not** transmitted from one ruminant to another.
- There are vaccines available. These reduce the risk of severe disease and death from Bluetongue.
- Bluetongue has a variable incubation period. An animal could be infected 4 - 12 days **before** it shows any signs. It is sensible to change needles after every injection to ensure we do not transmit the disease accidentally.

The Bluetongue situation is constantly evolving and if you or your vet have any suspicion of a notifiable disease then this must be reported to APHA.

CONTACT US

For all out of hours emergency calls please call your usual surgery number, and your call will be directed directly to our answering service who will contact the on-call vet(s) for your site.

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If you would like more information on this month's newsletter topics, please speak to any of our farm vet team.