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Sheep - February 2019 Parasite Forecast

December 2018 saw relatively mild weather in the UK. The overall UK mean temperature was 5.8 °C, 1.9 °C above the long-term average (1981-2010). This was observed across all regions for both the month of December and the previous 3 months (October-December).

Overall, UK rainfall was 99% of the long-term average. Regionally, lower than expected rainfall was observed in northeast Scotland and northeast England in the month of December, with higher or expected levels of rainfall in all other regions. For the previous 3 months (October-December 2018), south Wales and England experienced above average rainfall, with below average rainfall observed across all other regions.

Review of flock health plan

February is a good time to review parasite control plans for the forthcoming grazing season. Important things to bear in mind include:

- Seasonal risk and farm history.
- Identifying at-risk animals.
- Familiarity with the anthelmintic products available and their particular indications for use.
- Diagnostic and performance testing.
- Identifying “safe” and “contaminated” grazing.
- Bio-security and quarantine treatments.
- Incorporation into other work planned through the year.

More information can be found on the “[SCOPS](#)” group website, and sheep-specific [NADIS parasite control planners](#) are available through your vet (Figure 1).



Figure 1 : NADIS sheep specific parasite control planners are available through your vet.

Fluke

Despite the mild weather experienced in December, development of liver fluke on pastures is likely to have arrested. However, previously contaminated pastures will remain infective into the following season, meaning continued vigilance for signs of disease is necessary. Similarly, animals which grazed high risk pastures towards the end of last season may be affected by

chronic fluke infection, negatively affecting health, welfare and productivity, reducing weight gain, milk yields and fertility.

Advised actions include:

- Monitoring for signs disease.
- In the absence of obvious signs, consider diagnostic testing.
 - * Fluke egg counts can be used to diagnose chronic infection.
 - * Where available, abattoir feedback can provide useful information (Figure 2)
- Routine clostridial vaccination to prevent Black disease should be considered if not already in place.

Where fluke infection is identified:

- Treatment with triclabendazole is recommended for acute disease.
- For chronic infection consider use of a product other than triclabendazole.
- Due to concerns over emerging drug resistance, ensure correct dosing is based on bodyweight, and consider testing for treatment effectiveness.
- For more information please speak to your vet or SQP.

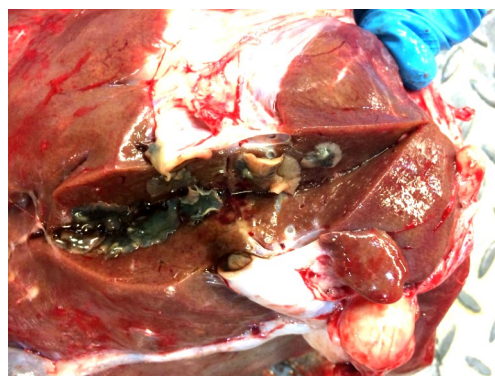


Figure 2 : Getting abattoir feedback can be a useful way of identifying and monitoring fluke infection on your farm (Photo credit: Jose Del Puerto DVM OV)

Within a high risk area, the risk of fluke depends on factors specific to each individual farm.

Have animals which have grazed wet or boggy pastures in the previous grazing season since been tested and/or treated for liver fluke?

Yes No

Parasitic Gastroenteritis (PGE)

Grazing store lambs and yearlings may continue to be at risk from worm infections through the winter.

In pregnant ewes, the “periparturient rise” (PPR) in worm egg count will potentially lead to heavy pasture contamination and higher risk of disease in lambs in the coming grazing season if untreated (Figure 3). Dormant larvae upon resuming development in the spring can also be a source of pasture contamination and can cause scours in lambs.

Advised actions include:

- Treatment of overwintered store or replacement lambs can be informed by pooled faecal egg counts.
- When treating PPR in ewes, SCOPS currently recommend one of the following options:
 - * Leave a proportion of the ewes untreated (around 10% as a rough guide).
 - * Treat early in the post-lambing phase.
- Products available in most major worming groups against dormant larvae.
- For more information, please speak to your vet or SQP and see the [“SCOPS” group guidelines](#).



Figure 3 : The “periparturient rise” in ewes themselves can be an important source of pasture contamination and risk to lambs.

Within a high risk area, the risk of PGE depends on factors specific to each individual farm.

Have store and replacement lambs been monitored for weight gain and/or FECs in the preceeding months? **Yes** **No**

As local conditions can vary considerably, why not call the practice to discuss control measures and treatments relevant to your farm? The most effective way to control all parasites is as part of a veterinary parasite control plan so contact the practice for further details.

The NADIS Parasite Forecast is based on detailed monthly Met Office data for each of the 40km² areas across the UK. Weather conditions directly affect the likely levels of parasite activity. Disease incidence will also depend on farm management, grazing and treatment history. Individual farm and field conditions may vary, so consult your vet as part of a veterinary parasite control plan.

Ectoparasites

Scab (mite) and louse infestations can become a significant problem in sheep flocks over the autumn and winter months.

It is important to remember sheep scab is a notifiable disease in Scotland.

Advised actions include:

- Monitoring for signs of disease (Figure 4)
- Distinction between scab and lice can be made through microscopic examination of skin scrapings and fleece samples.
- Fields, sheds and pens where infected sheep have been kept and handled should be considered a potential source of infection to other sheep for up to 17 days.



Figure 4 : Severe case of sheep scab characterised by wool loss, serous exudate and thickening of the skin.

Where treatment is required:

- Injectable macrocyclic lactone (3-ML) products are effective against sheep scab with [varying periods of protection](#).
 - * Group 3-MLs treatments should be factored into your roundworm control strategy.
 - * Emergence of resistance in scab mite populations to treatment with 3-MLs make correct diagnosis and treatment vital. Seek veterinary advice if treatment failure is suspected.
- Plunge dipping with diazinon is effective against both scab and louse infestations.