



FACTSHEET

Worming Cattle and Sheep

We generally think that **adult cattle** are pretty resistant to worms, although high yielding dairy cows may benefit from dosing with eprinomectin and you may see a boost in yield. Talk to us about testing to see if this is necessary on your farm. Other adult cattle should be OK without worming.

The notable exception to this is when cattle move from clean grazing to new pasture with a higher worm burden of either gut worms or lung worms. In this situation their natural immunity may have decreased and when they are faced with a big challenge they can develop problems.

Spring born suckler calves typically pick up a small number of worms and develop their own immunity during their first grazing season alongside their dams. Depending on weaning dates and management in mid summer they may benefit from faecal egg counts and worming. We advise treatment after housing to kill any worms that have hibernated in the gut wall.

If turned out for a second grazing season these animals will benefit from bolus treatments or faecal egg counts and targeted treatments if they are grazing contaminated pastures (pastures that have been grazed previously). They may also benefit from a Huskvac vaccine for lung worm.

Autumn born suckler calves will be at significant risk of worm infection in their first grazing season if grazing contaminated pastures. They will benefit from bolus treatment or faecal egg counts and targeted treatments. They will need a wormer dose after housing to kill any hibernating worms.

They may also benefit from a Huskvac vaccine for lung worm if being turned out on risky pasture.

Spring born dairy calves may be at risk of infection if they are not turned out on safe pasture. Worm eggs can survive on the pasture overwinter and if calves are grazing without adult cattle they are more at risk. If they can't be turned out on safe pasture they should be treated in the early part of the grazing season, to minimise pasture contamination, with either boluses or targeted treatments. They may also be vulnerable to lung worm so Huskvac vaccination may be necessary. They will also need a wormer after housing to kill hibernating worms. Depending on exposure they may need further treatments/vaccination during their second grazing season.

Autumn born dairy calves often acquire significant infection early in the next spring grazing period. If they can't be turned out on safe pasture then treat early to minimise further pasture contamination. Use boluses or targeted treatments and consider Huskvac vaccination for lung worm. If calves remain on the same pasture then the worm levels can build up and up over the spring to very high levels from mid summer onwards. These calves will probably need treating during the summer and will definitely need a treatment after housing for hibernating worms. They will still be vulnerable when turned out for their second grazing season so consider further treatments/vaccination.

Remember that no cattle develop an immunity to **liver fluke**. Therefore all types and ages of cattle are vulnerable to liver fluke if they are grazing contaminated pastures. The liver fluke needs the mud snail to complete its life cycle. Once the larvae come out of the snail they move about on the dew in the grass and wait to be eaten. The peak activity for liver fluke and mud snails is the late spring and summer with cattle taking on the infection then and typically starting to show signs of disease in the winter as the liver fluke grow internally and start to damage the livers. The abattoir may give you good feedback on liver damage, but if not we would suggest testing to see if liver fluke is a problem on your farm.

You can reduce the risk to your cattle by avoiding grazing particularly wet/boggy pastures or fencing these bits off. However, if you can't avoid infection then treating after housing is normally a good way to control liver fluke. Speak to us about different products and timings.

Liver fluke in sheep

It is the same species of fluke that affects both sheep and cattle, but the advice is different. Sheep can be susceptible to "acute" liver fluke whilst in cattle the "chronic" form is more common. The acute form is caused by large numbers of immature liver fluke migrating through the liver and causing severe damage as they go. In this situation the sheep start to show clinical signs and reduced performance towards the end of the summer and some severely affected farms may need a treatment in August/September. If possible we try to use a move to "safe" grazing such as turnips to work in a fluke treatment. Sheep which have not had this treatment will need another dose during the winter and this can be important to try and minimise pasture contamination.

We offer a sheep parasite plan to help develop a good protocol for you and your specific farm situation.

Sheep parasite plan

Most sheep farmers are now aware of the importance of getting parasite control right. You may also be aware of how difficult this can be and that the advice coming out of vet practices and the literature seems to keep changing.

The SCOPS (<http://www.scops.org.uk/>) guide is a useful place to start, but nothing beats drawing up an individual plan for your farm where we can talk through the system, the problems and the different grazing options you have.

We are seeing real problems with resistance to both wormers and fluke treatments so increasingly we need to monitor the response to treatment as well as the need to treat.

With new products on the market and new ideas being developed; paying a one off fee for a bespoke parasite package is really good value when you spread the cost over the whole flock.

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