

# Black Sheep Farm Health

June 2023 Newsletter



## Early Toxovax

After the issues with toxovax supply last year it is worth considering vaccinating earlier in the year to avoid the seasonal use that often leads to problems in the supply chain. There are toxovax dates available before July which is a good opportunity to vaccinate any gimmers that will be going to the tup for the first time this year. Toxovax can be given from 5 months of age so ewe lambs will have to be vaccinated later in the year.

## A Bad Tick Year

This year has been bad for ticks and tick borne diseases, in both our livestock species and our companion animals. Working dogs are one of the most valuable tools on farm and so make sure they are protected! There are several products available, give us a call for more information.

## Returning Showing Sheep

With the return of the showing season, it is time to consider the risk posed by returning sheep. All returning animals can pose a disease risk so must undergo quarantine procedures.

For animals that will be attending a single show, we recommend that they undergo full quarantine procedures on return. Quarantine protocols should be tailored and will be outlined in each flock's health plan but generally include 3 weeks of quarantine during which animals should be treated for resistant worms, sheep scab, liver fluke (depending on risk) and lameness.

For animals that will be attending multiple shows through the season, full quarantine after every return to farm is often not feasible, so we would recommend that these animals are kept completely separate from the rest of the flock for the duration of the show season, ideally housed or on 'dirty ground'. This ground should not be grazed by the rest of the flock after this time, and cattle or cropping could be used to 'clean' the pasture. Quarantined sheep should have no contact with the rest of the flock, and should not use the same equipment or handling systems. Following the last show of the season, these animals should undergo full quarantine procedures before being integrated back into the flock. Alternatively, and to better control the disease risk, show animals could be culled from commercial flocks.

These principles also apply to stock returning from sale and loaned/shared tups.

For further information or advice, please don't hesitate to get in touch, and consider using the 'Make your farm a fortress' resources on XLVets website. <https://xlpublications.s3.amazonaws.com/farm-fortress/biosecurity-booklet-sheep/files/assets/basic-html/index.html#2>

## Preventing Wormer Resistance Through the Grazing Season

With reports of resistance to the four commonly used wormer groups, white (1-BZ), yellow (2-LV), clear (3-ML) and orange (4-AD)(sheep only), it is more important than ever that we aim to use wormers responsibly throughout the grazing season in order to preserve their effectiveness. There are a number of ways in which we can do this which generally involve avoiding overuse, avoiding buying in resistant worms, avoiding underdosing and ensuring you know the levels of resistance on your farm.

Avoiding overuse:

- Monitoring stock - it is important to ensure we are only using anthelmintics when they are required. This can be assessed either through regular worm egg counts to monitor the worm burden and identify upwards trends to decide when dosing is required or by using targeted selective treatment (TST). TST uses a daily live weight gain cut off to determine the animals not growing well enough which should be dosed, this is assuming nothing else is holding back growth such as trace element status or nutrition.



## Preventing Wormer Resistance Through the Grazing Season Continued

- Grazing management - there are many ways that grazing can be used to reduce the worm burden animals are exposed to. This includes rotational or paddock grazing, increasing sward length, grazing young or naive animals on new lays or forage crops and the use of bioactive forages (these are crops rich in tannins such as chicory that have anti-parasitic effects).
- Pasture risk management - this is about identifying your lowest risk fields and using these for animals that are more likely to be affected by worms, particularly young lambs. The highest risk pasture can then be grazed by cattle, dry ewes or be cut or ploughed for silage or other crops to reduce the risk. SCOPS has more detailed information on this.

Avoiding buying-in resistant worms - any returning or newly purchased sheep could be carrying resistant worms. It is important to make sure they receive Zolvix on arrival to remove any resistant worms. After this treatment they should be kept on hard standing for 48 hours to prevent any worm eggs passing onto your pasture and then turned out onto dirty pasture.

Avoiding underdosing - another risk factor for resistance is to expose parasites with an incomplete dose, this means partially resistant parasites are likely to survive and increase the resistant genes within the parasite population.

- Ensure dosing equipment is in good working order and is calibrated before use with a syringe or measuring cylinder (we have plenty at the practice!)
- Know the weight of your animals - ensure some animals in the group are weighed so dosing is accurate to group weight. This also prevents overdosing which will cause issues with toxicity with some products, particularly yellow wormers
- Only use in date products
- Store worming products carefully e.g. not too hot or too cold

Maintain a healthy refugia population - refugia is the population of worms that are not exposed to the wormer when a dose is given, these are generally worms in untreated sheep or larvae on the pasture. Refugia enable any resistant worms to be diluted into a wider population of worms slowing the increase in resistant worms in the population. Considerations for refugia populations:-

- Ensuring at least 10% of animals are left untreated, leaving the biggest fittest lambs. This needs to be per field not over the whole lamb crop.
- Don't dose and move, sheep should be left on dirty pasture for 4-7 days after worming before being moved to cleaner pasture.
- Avoiding treating at low times of refugia e.g. early in the grazing season when pasture contamination is low, during dry periods or when animals are on low risk pasture. These will generally be times when infection is also reduced making informed decisions on treatment with WEC even more important.

Ensuring you use the right product is also important, this will vary depending on any known issues with resistance on the farm and the history of drenches used in the season. Products should generally be rotated through the season to avoid overuse of one active ingredient. It is also important to make use of new classes of wormers e.g. Zolvix as a late season drench and for quarantine treatment.

The more we know the better! It is important to know if resistance is a problem on your farm, to do this pre and post drench worm egg counts should be taken ideally every time a worming product is used. We will not see resistance as a clinical issue (failure to gain weight and scouring) until at least 50% of the worm population is resistant by which time it is very difficult to do anything about this.