

# Confusion over flukicide use

The VMD and NOAH recently reviewed the residue levels of all flukicides in milk from dairy cows and to protect consumers issued new product selection guidelines last year. But while the new guidelines are definitive, there is still confusion amongst milk producers over the flukicides that can and cannot now be used in both lactating and dry cows.

Fluke problems are escalating, while at the same time the available flukicide control options are being restricted, says vet Tim O'Sullivan from Shropshire Farm Vets. "With the recent legislative changes, there's no doubt farmers are facing a challenge to keep up with everything. But it's important that they do—just because you have used a product in the past, you can't now assume that you can continue to use it. It's vital that you check out the usage indications on product labels.

"However, the situation has actually been made easier for prescribing vets. Essentially, the use of flukicides in adult dairy cows has now been limited to just four active ingredients: oxclozanide,

albendazole, triclabendazole 24% (only in dry cows more than 48 days off calving) and clorsulon 100mg/ml in combination with ivermectin (only in dry cows more than 60 days off calving). The situation in heifers is different with many more products able to be used, albeit with significant restrictions."

## Treating lactating cows

Mr O'Sullivan says that for lactating dairy cows there are now only two active ingredients suitable: albendazole and oxclozanide. However, he says both of these treatments only act against adult fluke and not all products containing these active ingredients

are allowable for use in lactating animals. "It's really important for farmers to speak to their vet to ensure whatever they are using is still permitted for use in lactating cows and that they are observing the correct milk withhold periods."

If fluke is a problem in your herd, he says there's a very strong case for treating housed milking cows pre-turn-out in February and March. "At this time of year when animals have been housed for three to four months there should only be adult fluke present in the cattle and treatment now, with oxclozanide, for example, will kill adult flukes in the bile ducts and prevent them laying eggs that will contaminate pasture. Treatment now before the cattle go out to grass will also help take the pressure off the other available flukicide treatments later in the year."

Recent environmental conditions have been perfect for the early stages of liver fluke and its intermediate host the mud snail. And with another mild, wet winter to date compounding the situation, the disease is likely to become increasingly problematic. Liver fluke control still relies heavily on the use of strategic flukicide treatments, but with a limited number of active ingredients available that don't kill all stages of fluke, it is becoming absolutely vital that the correct product is used at the correct time.

## Work with your vet

According to MSD Animal Health livestock veterinary adviser Matt Haslam, it is crucial that dairy farmers work with their vet to obtain a diagnosis of the liver fluke situation and threat on their own farm, and discuss the latest best practice flukicide usage advice.

"From a diagnostic point of view, a bulk milk test is the first

starting point," he says. "The result will tell you if your herd has been exposed to liver fluke. If the result is negative you still need to remain vigilant—particularly if your farm is wet—but if it is positive your vet will need to carry out

further investigation. This may involve taking faecal samples for analysis or even blood sampling any thin or scouring animals."

He adds that a high positive bulk sample indicates that over 25% of the herd may be chronically infected with liver

fluke. "It has been shown that herds with a high positive bulk milk antibody test for liver fluke give 1.5kg less milk per cow per day compared with herds with a negative test result. And unfortunately the bulk milk samples will remain highly positive even after successful treatment, so this cannot be used to demonstrate treatment success.

"It's vitally important that everyone works together to follow good codes of practice for the control of liver fluke. Dairy farmers must work with their vet to prove that fluke is a problem within the herd, rather than simply blanket treating large groups of animals. And flukicide usage guidelines and milk withdrawal periods must be followed accurately. For example, oxclozanide—available as Zanil in the UK—has a 72-hour milk withhold.

"It is also important to consider that some flukicide products, such as albendazole, have activity against gastro-intestinal worms. While this may sound like a good idea, wormer products should only be used when worms are a problem. If you are using a product with activity against fluke and worms, you may be inadvertently selecting for resistance in the worm population, which could cause significant problems in the future."



Vet Tim O'Sullivan.

# ICEMINT

## new formulation



- First COOLS then HEATS
- Softens hard and swollen udders
- Supports therapy for mastitis and udder oedema
- Unique blend of Peppermint, Horse Chestnut & Arnica oils soothes painful & inflamed udders.
- Reduces milk conductivity - very useful with robots
- Unique 1000ml hang-up container

*"An excellent product! ICEMINT definitely reduces swelling faster than similar products we used previously and without the skin irritation that we got following application."*

Richard & Matt Fisher, Penrith

 **G Shepherd Animal Health**  
Advice, Quality & Value

t: 01772 690131

e: office@gshepherd.co.uk w: www.gshepherd.co.uk