

Liver fluke warning as wormer resistance increases

Livestock producers should rethink their liver fluke programme to avoid an onslaught of the disease.

Speaking to *Farmers Weekly* at Livestock 2012, Cath Tudor from ProStock vets, Carmarthen, said a change in weather patterns had resulted in a variation to the breeding period of liver fluke.

Traditionally livestock producers worm animals in the autumn months of October and November, during winter housing, to prevent liver fluke.

But Ms Tudor said wet conditions in the summer meant many producers might now need to consider worming earlier than this.

"Now, because the breeding season is extending, we are seeing adult fluke at this time of year," she explained.

She warned that sheep producers needed to be particularly proactive, with widespread resistance to triclabendazole wormers being reported.



TIM SCRIVENER

A bespoke worming programme is needed for every farm to prevent resistance.

FLUKE SYMPTOMS

- * Sudden death in sheep
- * Scouring
- * Loose skin under the jaw, known as "bottle jaw"
- * Reduction in milk production in dairy cows
- * Loss of condition
- * Poor weight gain and performance

"In sheep [resistance] is causing a big problem, because many producers think they are treating them, but faecal egg counts are showing the same levels, if not higher post-worming."

She said sheep farmers should keep monitoring for resistance by sampling faeces or getting feedback on livers from their slaughterhouse.

Ideally, she said samples should be taken within three weeks of treatment to determine if the application has worked.

However, she said it was difficult to give producers accurate advice on how often they should now be worming.

"Every farm is individual. Some will need to do it all year round, while others may only need to do it every seven to eight weeks."

Instead she advised producers to talk to their vet about setting up a bespoke control programme.