

SHEEP

A 15-page **Farmers Guardian** special feature

Plan worm control now

Vet Emily Gascoigne suggests sheep farmers should review worm control now to rationalise wormer use in the year ahead.

Miss Gascoigne, from Dorset-based Synergy Farm Health, says over winter there have been serious worm issues due to the mild weather.

"As the beginning of the grazing season approaches and the new crop of lambs are about to be turned out, it is an ideal opportunity to review grazing strategies and worm control to rationalise and reduce wormer use over the next year.

"Anthelmintic resistance is a constant and dynamic challenge to lamb performance and the current thinking is targeted treatments are one strategy to achieve effective worm control."

Miss Gascoigne says knowing the status of pastures prior to the grazing season can help reduce worm burdens for the subsequent year (see panel).

She adds what you are treating is key and this can focus your choice of wormer. "Different wormer families may be more appropriate at different phases in the growing season and treatment with the wrong wormer can be costly and could prove fatal."

Miss Gascoigne says diagnosis and active monitoring is essential for rational drug usage.

"Consider why you are worming. Have you demonstrated an elevated worm egg count in your lambs or are you seeing increased numbers of dags or even reduced growth rates? Knowing how your lambs should be performing in terms of kilograms of weight per week can be useful to identify drops in growth. If lambs are growing well, a move



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EMILY GASCOIGNE



to clean pasture may be more appropriate than drench but this should form part of an active discussion with your vet or adviser."

Cost-effective

Miss Gascoigne adds it is important to spring clean your resistance profiling. "Knowing what drugs work on your farm is key to cost-effective and efficacious drenching and undiagnosed resistance is a significant cost to lamb production.

"Discuss with your vet the most appropriate method of diagnosis for your flock. Remember, resistance is not finite and can accumulate on-farm.

"Drenches which have proved effective before are not immune to loss of function in the future and all effective drenches should be regularly checked."

Miss Gascoigne says the first wormer dose administered in the year is likely to be the drench given to the ewe in the lambing shed

Knowing the status of pastures

- Use an Ordnance Survey map of your farm and follow Eblix recommendations to assign a risk to each pasture
- For example, a brand new ley would be considered low risk, a pasture which has been free of lambs or stores in the previous year but grazed

byadults would be considered medium risk, and a pasture which has had lambs, stores or permanent pasture is high risk

- Ewes and lambs should preferably be put on the lower risk pastures to reduce the risk of them picking up high worm burdens

in order to reduce the amount she contaminates turnout pastures. "Her immunity drops two weeks before lambing for approximately eight weeks and she sheds an increased numbers of eggs.

"Tactical worming of ewes can reduce pasture contamination but it should be considered carefully. Worm populations of the pasture in spring will be minimal, especially on new leys, and this could lead to increased risk of resistance development.

"Worm egg counts in the lambing shed may help show a need to worm in the ewes pre-lambing. Long-acting products are increasingly popular but should be used with care. Treating every ewe with such a product and moving to a clean pasture will mean any resistant worms created will have pasture domination until it ceases working or new worms are introduced. Standard SCOPS recommendations suggest leaving 10-20 per cent un-dosed."