

# Farmers should unite over sheep scab

## ▶▶ Treatment options of dipping or injections

By Angela Calvert

FARMERS working together is the only way to control sheep scab, said Joe Henry of Alnthumbria Veterinary Group, speaking at the National Sheep

Association North Sheep event.

Mr Henry outlined the approach his practice had taken to tackle the problem within the area, which resulted in no cases of scab for three years.

He said: "Not every itchy sheep has scab, so if a case is suspected, it is important the farmer contacts their vet to get a rock solid diagnosis.

"No scab outbreak can successfully be treated on its own. No farm is an island and if one farm has the disease, neighbouring farms will also have the disease. There is no point in treating one farm's sheep in isolation, as they would soon become reinfected.

"Scab can be a costly disease, but if dealt with effectively in

collaboration with neighbours, it only needs to cost £1 per ewe. Every single scab mite has to be killed for treatment to work and mites can live for 18 days off a sheep, making it crucial for all sheep to be treated at the same time.

"The options are dipping or injectables. I personally prefer dipping as mites are killed

instantaneously, whereas it might take seven to 10 days if injected. Meat withdrawal periods need taking into account.

"It is crucial all treatment is done accurately with calibrated equipment using the correct dosage and at the right time.

"There is no stigma to having scab. There real stigma is not owning up to it."

Mr Henry said once a diagnosis had been confirmed, a farmer

must contact all his neighbour and tell them.

He recommended calling a meeting of all farmers at least one farm clear of a confirmed outbreak. All farmers then needed to agree to treat their sheep within an agreed timeframe and a farmer chairman appointed to ensure this was carried out.

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## How to eliminate sheep scab

### Joe Henry's key recommendations on working to eliminate sheep scab:

- Establish correct diagnosis from your vet
- Inform neighbours
- Call a meeting of all sheep keepers in the area, including smallholders
- Vets could give a short talk about scab and treatment options

- Get everyone to agree to treat their sheep
- Discuss and agree the best time to do this; February has been found to be a good time in Northumberland
- All sheep to be treated with the correct dosage at the same time
- Appoint a chairman to ensure this is carried out
- Put in place quarantine procedures to prevent any potential future outbreaks



Joe Henry says farmers working together can control sheep scab.