

## NEWS

# Beware the perils of saturated land

LAMENESS and foot problems will be the most immediate problems for sheep grazing flooded and saturated land with the expectation of liver fluke becoming a major issue later in the year.

In addition, there will be management issues both of the sheep themselves and in dealing with reinstating flooded grazings.

Vet Dan Griffiths of the Paragon Veterinary Group, Cumbria, said: "The big one is lameness for sheep. The poached wet land provides ideal conditions for bacteria, such as *Fusobacterium necrophorum*, to thrive as well as softening the skin around the hoof, both of which increase the risk of lameness diseases such as Scald or Footrot.

"Furthermore, prolonged damp conditions do not allow the hoof to properly wear down and this can lead to overgrowth and cracks weeks later.

## FLOOD EFFECTS

As farms and farmland recover from the heavy rainfall and, in some areas, severe flooding, Neil Ryder talked to vet, Dan Griffiths, about the health implications for farm livestock, especially sheep

"Then if you get mild wet conditions followed by a hard frost, that poached land gets hard undulations, which the sheep are walking around on. These can cause mechanical type trauma including white line, footrot and damage to the inter digital skin."

Cattle hooves are more robust than sheep hooves but the wet land will still increase the risk of bacterial infections like Digital Dermatitis and Foul in the Foot.

Mr Griffiths said the second big problem will be fluke, which affects cattle and sheep. Normally, it is a bigger risk in sheep, because they graze lower to the ground and are exposed to higher numbers of

fluke organisms. The fluke cycle is dependent on the mud snail as an intermediate host. It requires wet land to survive so flooded land provides perfect conditions for them to multiply.

"This coupled with the fact that for every mud snail infected the fluke numbers increase 600-fold means that the risk of fluke will be high again in 2016," said Mr Griffiths. "Dependent on the summer weather, the risk could start anytime from August onwards and farmers should ensure they have a robust fluke treatment plan in place for any stock grazing affected pasture later in the year."

Mr Griffiths says that most

late spring lambing flocks would be on higher ground and while they may not be affected by flooding the prolonged high rainfall has left hill-grazing very boggy, which also increases the risk of lameness and fluke.

The direct and indirect stress that floods will put on sheep should not be underestimated. They include increased risk of abortions, higher stocking pressures, slurry management problems, and higher feed costs as supplementary feeding may be required.

After water has receded, it is important to check pasture for any contamination, debris or other risks to stock.

"The other major management issue post-flooding is the repair to damaged fencing," said Mr Griffiths. "This is imperative to prevent contact with neighbouring stock and potential disease spread, as well as keeping stock secure.

"Finally, if you have any problems your vet is always happy to help and advise."



ADVICE: Dan Griffiths, of the Paragon Veterinary Group