

# Flock size counts

How many folk know the size of their clients' flocks? There's probably some way to go in this basic data gathering! Sheep vet **Richard Knight** explains why it's important



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What are your individual client's main production aims? How is this recorded so that everyone working or dealing with clients knows this, or is it just information gleaned by the old guard and kept there?

On flock size, a farmer with a large flock is likely to have different needs compared to a small flock, with the former being more likely to have a high level of skill, technical knowledge and entrepreneurialism which

has enabled them to get to where they are, compared to someone with a small flock and more likely to need technical knowledge. Large flocks might appreciate more input with informed management-level decisions.

Mineral supplements are an area needing this, going beyond simple dosage to look at calculating supply of trace elements from forage and concentrates. As better but more costly supplements become available, targeted use leads to a more sustainable sale-and-use model.

You can do the maths on the current supply. If a ewe

eats 2-2.5% of her body-weight per day as dry matter, and you know concentrate weights fed, a bit of science and evidence can be brought back into the job when combined with a forage mineral analysis. If you involve the vet too, liver trace mineral analysis from cull ewes and lambs complete the picture and the correct solution can be calculated and given every year.

## PARASITE CONTROL

Internal parasite management, too, is an area which demands impeccable management as flocks get larger, as errors will get magnified.

Simple tests such as pre-dosing and post-dosing faecal egg counts (drench test for anthelmintic efficacy) not only prove the need for treatment in the first place, but also demonstrate the success of treatment and re-validate the value of a particular product to that farmer.

Levamisole treated animals should be tested seven days after treatment, benzimidazole treated animals 10-14 days after treatment and macrocyclic lactone treated animals 14-16 days after treatment. How many out there do this? Farmers, SQPs and vets need all to commu-

nicate to be involved in this process so that the sheep and everyone else benefits.

For more information on anthelmintics, do consult [www.scops.org.uk](http://www.scops.org.uk) regularly.

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