

Newsletter

February 2020

Happy New Year to you all! This month Rob gives us a good reminder about appropriate sampling to get the most out of faecal worm egg counts and we have a reminder about our upcoming farmers meeting.



Parasites and poo picking

Over the past few decades, wormer resistance is one of the main threats to controlling parasites in sheep and cattle. With no new wormers on the horizon, targeted use of wormers is integral to protecting wormer efficacy on individual farms. The good news is that awareness of the significance of wormer resistance amongst the farming and veterinary communities is high. This has encouraged the adoption of routine monitoring strategies against worms and fluke to promote sustainable and targeted wormer use. This includes monitoring for clinical signs, growth rates, disease risk in the farming press and importantly testing animals for infection at key points in the production cycle. Collecting dung samples for further diagnostic testing is integral to making informed decisions about when to worm sheep and cattle.

Over the winter months we have had many dung samples dropped off for fluke testing, and soon it will be time to monitor lambs for gutworms. Unfortunately, sometimes we are unable to process these samples due to being provided with insufficient history or due to how they were collected or stored.

We always need a current history about the animals tested, as we need the information to provide you with the appropriate advice. For example, if you have sampled your animals too soon after a wormer was given, you might get a false negative result and testing would be a waste of money. On the back of this newsletter, we have provided a copy of the sample submission form to be completed when you drop off dung samples. We are happy to help you fill out the form over the phone or in the practice. We can email you copies of the forms, provide you with a paper copy or you can photocopy the forms. However, **without the form being completed we cannot process dung samples.**

To make the most informed decisions about worm and fluke control then samples should be collected in the following manner:

- **Wearing a glove collect fresh dung** (still warm) from the ground. Egg counts can be reduced in older samples due to hatching of eggs. Samples can be collected from the rectum if your vet has trained you to do this and you are very gentle. Wash your hands afterwards.
- **A heaped teaspoonful per sample is enough** but it is always better to have too much than too little, but we don't need a bucket full! This amount can be used to check for both worm and fluke eggs if necessary.
- **Sample 10 animals for routine monitoring.** There will be situations where a smaller number of samples may be collected e.g. investigation of clinical disease such as diarrhoea.
- **Place the samples in individual bags, gloves or pots.** Write an ID on the bag/pot if appropriate. E.g. always do this if individual follow up testing is going to be carried out (Photo 1). We can provide sampling equipment as necessary.
- **Contain appropriately.** To prevent eggs from hatching before examination, squeeze all the air from the bag before sealing or fill pot to the brim with faeces.
- **Store appropriately.** To further reduce the chance of eggs hatching - store hygienically at 4°C if there will be a delay before dropping off. Ideally drop samples off within 24 hours of collection.
- **For pooled samples:**
 - Always dung sample individually in separate containers and then we will pool them. This is because if you only take dung from the top which has been produced by an animal with a low worm burden, we might get a falsely low result. This would mean missing treating animals with high worm burdens (Photo 1).
 - When placing individual samples in a larger container, always label with the group ID. To keep group samples together a top tip is using a couple of rectal gloves to tie samples together (Photo 2).

- Always sample animals in the same age and management group i.e. do not submit 5 samples from ewes and 5 samples from lambs for a single pooled egg count.
- **Supply as much information as possible** as this helps with interpretation of results e.g. age of animals sampled, whether they are scouring or ill thriven, dates of any recent treatment and what product was used.
- **If posting samples:** you must comply with post office regulations for sending pathological samples (ask us for further details). Samples that leak are a serious health and safety risk. Send first class, ideally not over a weekend or bank holiday, with type of sample indicated on the envelope.

It is also important to collect representative samples from animals that you are testing. If you are worried that animals are suffering from clinical disease (e.g. diarrhoea), sample those animals from the group. If you are interested in monitoring to see which groups need testing, sample each group in batches sampling animals at random. Time of year is also important when sampling animals for different worms. For example, if samples are taken before worms have laid eggs, tests results may be falsely negative. We can advise at health plan reviews when to sample animals, but please do contact us if you require further advice about what animals to sample and when.



Photo 1



Photo 2

Student survey on castration methods

One of our RDSVS vet students is currently doing a one year course in agriculture at the University of Newcastle, and is writing her dissertation about calf castration methods. She has made a survey asking vets and farmers about the castration techniques they use, and would be grateful if you had the time to complete the survey via the link below. Many thanks.

https://nclafrd.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_43n2IFKuOqUqfzL?fbclid=IwAR1E-6QhJ3FWMybKk69nggITuA9RHAKNHtjX8vx77Yaruv2I-7EbEFe3yMA

Beef Meeting: February 19th 6.30pm

The Farm Animal Practice would like to invite all of our cattle clients to the first practice meeting of 2020 on Wednesday 19th February.

Rachel will be providing us with a further update on her project into Failure of Passive Transfer (FPT) in Beef Calves that many of you have contributed to the data for. This update will discuss the risk factors for FPT and how to avoid them.

Linking nicely to this theme MSD Veterinary Advisor, Hannah McKerrow, will provide us with information about the often problematic scouring calf and what can be done in the face of this clinical scenario.

The client evening will be held in the main Vet School building, starting at 6.30pm.

Refreshments and pizza will be provided.

Please let Ali know in advance if you plan to come, so that we can get numbers for food!

We look forward to seeing many of you there.

