



We hope everyone was able to make hay whilst the sun was shining. Whilst you have been out on the foragers, we have had a few minutes to compile the June edition of the newsletter. With the rain clouds rolling in to help bring the second cut on, what better time than to hear from Kim, our new resident, as she introduces herself and talks about targeted selective worm treatments in lambs. In addition, Amy provides us with an update on lungworm management, whilst Martin talks about some of the problems we have seen in the practice with slow calvings this year. As always, please do not hesitate to pick up the phone if you would like to discuss these or any other matters further.

Kim Hamer joins the Farm Animal team

Kim has eight years experience working in mixed practice in the English/Welsh borders, with a focus on farm animal medicine and an interest in sheep health and production, particularly preventative health management.

In pursuing this interest she has completed the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice (Sheep), to become a registered Advanced Practitioner in sheep medicine and is now working towards membership of the European College of Small Ruminant Health Management.

Kim also has an interest in education and has been involved in knowledge transfer programmes covering a variety of subjects related to sheep health.

Before joining us, Kim spent 9 months at the University of Glasgow teaching vet students.

Outside of work, Kim's main interests are hill walking, mountain biking and playing touch rugby.



Maximising growth while minimising wormer use

Wormers are cheap, so treatment is not the biggest cost associated with worms in lambs. Slow growth rates (requiring more feed to reach the same goal) are the main issue. This is the most important aspect of gut parasites for farm profitability, but it is also one of the first tangible signs of a significant worm burden in lambs.

Many farmers will notice a growth check in lambs before worm-associated diarrhoea starts and the sooner this is picked up, the sooner it can be stopped. In order to catch this stall before it becomes noticeable, lambs need to be weighed regularly, using EID technology to calculate whether each lamb is doing what it should, will make this data manageable.

Such individual lamb growth rates are important to enable Targeted Selective Treatments (TST) for those lambs that need them. A lamb that is growing well does not need to be treated, saving a dose of wormer and slowing down wormer resistance development on your farm. However if a lamb is not growing as expected, then gut worms could be the cause and treatment is necessary.

At the majority of gatherings only a small proportion of the

lambs will need treatment; later on in the year, up to two thirds may need to be treated; however some lambs will never need a worm treatment.

This control strategy is not suitable for *Nematodirosis* in May/June, when treatment of all at risk lambs according to weather conditions and pasture grazing history is necessary. Other factors that affect lamb growth rates need to be kept in mind, for example: the amount and quality of grass/feed in front of them; the weather – cold temperatures and persistent rain will reduce lamb growth rates; weaning; trace element deficiencies in grass-only systems.

Faecal samples are needed alongside TST to monitor the level of control that you are getting and assess pasture contamination to predict future burdens.

Breeding stock: new tests have been developed for finding sheep that are genetically resistant to the effect of worms, aiming to reduce the need for worming in the future. If this is something that you are interested in, please contact the Farm Animal Practice for more details.



Survey on *Nematodirus* wormer resistance

White drench resistance in *Nematodirus battus* in sheep was identified in 2010. Research at the Moredun Research Institute suggests that the genes which code for this resistance are widespread at low levels throughout the UK populations with focal regions of higher resistance gene frequency. We have developed the following survey to gather information on the current management strategies in use to control *Nematodirus*, and hopefully highlight any practices which are associated with the development and dissemination of resistance in this roundworm. If you have a moment and are able to complete the following survey it would be most helpful <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/nematodirus>

Managing parasites in cattle during the grazing season

With a long list of things to worry about, parasite control is often an easy thing to drop to the bottom of the list. However the signs are that liver fluke is becoming more widespread with changing climate, and lungworm has been receiving more attention again as farms continue to report outbreaks. The introduction of the clear drenches (such as Ivermectin and Moxidectin) in the 1980s, with their prolonged period of activity, provided a panacea for parasite management in cattle. However such drugs have been a victim of their own success.

Resistance to this group of drugs is now widespread in sheep, and although the worm species in cattle and sheep are different, there is no reason to think that resistance will not develop in cattle. With this in mind, the Control of Worms Sustainably (COWS) website is worth a look at www.cattleparasites.org.uk

The long duration of action of some wormers is thought to contribute to the development of resistance, and can also change the way that animals develop immunity to infestation. For example, it is common practice to dose calves prior to turnout to protect their entire grazing season. Although this may protect growth rates, it may also delay the build-up of immunity, leaving animals (especially replacement heifers) with little or no naturally developed resistance to gut and lungworms. This situation can lead to production impacts and outbreaks of lungworm in older animals.

The epidemiology of lungworm is not completely understood, and outbreaks can be unpredictable. It can be brought onto farms via replacement animals, and so lung-

worm control should be considered as part of the farm quarantine policy. Lungworm is the only parasitic worm for which there is an effective vaccine available on the market. However to maximise its efficacy, animals need to be allowed to become exposed to small doses of lungworm via grazing to boost immunity.

Ensuring that animals are allowed to develop immunity is also important for gut worms, and youngstock worming strategies should take this into account. Adult animals have traditionally been ignored as part of worm management, although it is prudent to ensure that the parasite status of the adult herd is understood and managed as necessary. Over-worming with Ivermectin is often not necessary. For example lice during the housing period can often be managed with insecticide products such as Spot-On as the need arises, so reducing the need for Ivermectin use.

Please use the practice for advice on parasite management. Every farm's risk factors will be different, depending on grazing patterns and youngstock management. We can help you develop an integrated solution to manage gut worms, lungworms, and liver fluke to maximise health and productivity in your herd.



Calving difficulties this year?

As always, feto-pelvic disproportion (big calf, small pelvis) has been the main reason we have been called to assist calvings and/or perform C-sections this spring. That being said, we have had a number of farmers report an unusually high rate of "slow calvings" (particularly towards the back end of the calving period).

Uterine inertia, where the cervix is fully dilated but uterine contractions are too weak to expel the fetus could be associated with up to 10% of all dairy cattle calving difficulties (particularly in heifers).

It is thought that excessive fat mobilisation can reduce magnesium availability and calcium mobilisation leading to uterine inertia and prolonged stage two of calving.

Given the reports of low protein silages earlier in the year and the inevitable change in feeding once the bulk of the

herd has calved, could nutritional issues be at the heart of these "slow calvers"? Some thoughts, but we cannot be sure.

Hypocalcaemia, hypomagnesaemia, old age, debility, lack of exercise, hyposelenaemia and infectious disease (such as Leptospirosis) are also theorised to play a potential role in uterine inertia. Getting a full post mortem done on the dead calf can be helpful to diagnose infectious diseases such as leptospirosis for example, and further blood tests on the mother can also be useful.

We could be over-interpreting the number of reports that we have received but there is "no smoke without fire" and we are very interested in hearing from any clients with any experience of higher than expected calving difficulties this season.