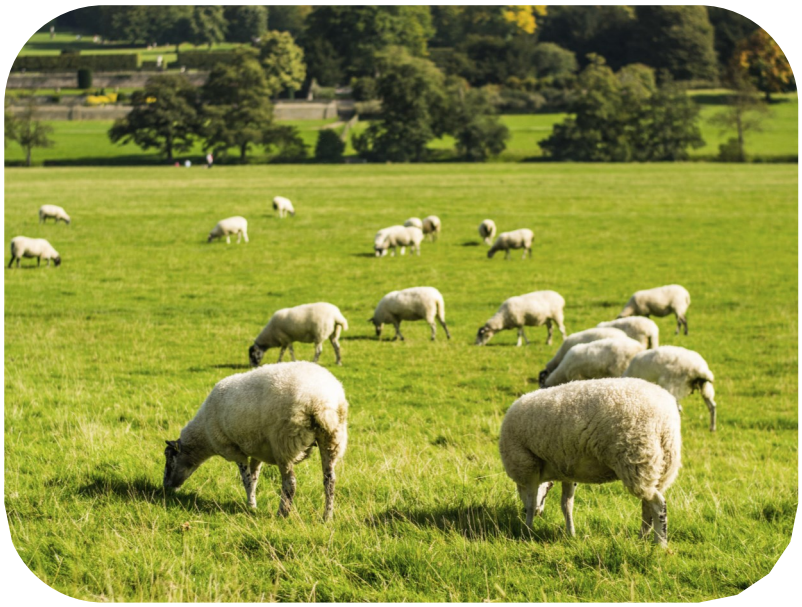


WELCOME TO

Flock Health 2016 NEWS

June 2016

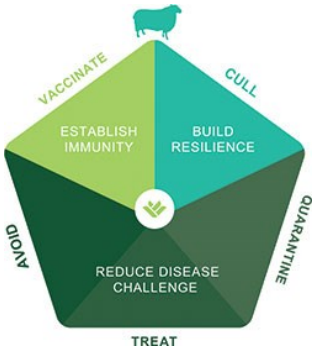
Lameness & the 5 Point Plan

by Jennie Lomas BSc (Hons) BVSc MRCVS

In addition to being an important welfare issue, lameness can seriously impact on production, with the estimated losses from footrot alone equating to approximately £6 for every ewe. The five-point management plan gives farmers a clear strategy to control lameness on their farm and it is recommended where footrot, scald and/or CODD (contagious ovine digital dermatitis) have been diagnosed as the cause of lameness.

5 Point Plan

1) Treat lame sheep ASAP – mark the affected limb and record the tag number.
2) Cull chronically lame sheep as these sheep will act as a source of infection for the rest of the flock. Do not breed replacements from sheep with a history of lameness.
3) Avoid spreading infection and reduce the disease challenge. Bacteria spread from foot to foot via the ground, particularly in warm, damp areas. Avoid wet, muddy areas by moving troughs regularly and think carefully about how and when sheep are handled.
4) Vaccinate – a vaccine is available to treat and prevent footrot. Common times to administer this are at housing and after shearing.
5) Strict biosecurity - Quarantine incoming sheep for at least 28 days and footbath on arrival.



These five actions should result in three outcomes for the flock:

- Increased natural resilience to the diseases that cause lameness
- Reduced disease challenge on the farm
- Improved immunity via vaccination

Scald: Scald and footrot share the same primary cause, the bacterium *Fusobacterium necrophorum*, which causes damage to the superficial layer of the skin between the claws and enables the establishment of other bacteria, including *Dichelobacter nododus*, which causes footrot. In scald, the interdigital skin is red and swollen and covered by a thin layer of white material. *Photo courtesy of NADIS.*

The greatest risk for CODD is posed by bought in sheep. These may not be lame, but they can still be carriers of the disease. Check the vendor's flock history carefully. Turnover and inspect the feet of all returning or bought in sheep. Footbath and quarantine them.

By taking a systematic and determined approach to managing lameness farmers can greatly improve productivity and thus generate better returns.

To trim or not to trim, that is the question?

Recent research has shown that foot trimming sheep with footrot or scald can actually be detrimental, as trimming delays healing and increases the risk of footrot returning, in addition to potentially spreading it to other sheep via the contaminated foot shears. Nationally, about 30% of farmers have stopped routine trimming and have seen fewer lame sheep.

Trimming may be needed where the hoof horn is deformed, but these sheep should be culled as soon as possible. If a diagnosis cannot be made without trimming, keep it to a minimum. The wall horn grows about 5mm a month and the length of sheep feet varies naturally over the seasons. Over a year growth often matches wear so trimming is not necessary. Over trimming can also lead to toe granulomas if the sensitive tissue is cut.

Contagious ovine digital dermatitis – associated with spirochete bacteria. *Photo courtesy of NADIS.*

Footrot.

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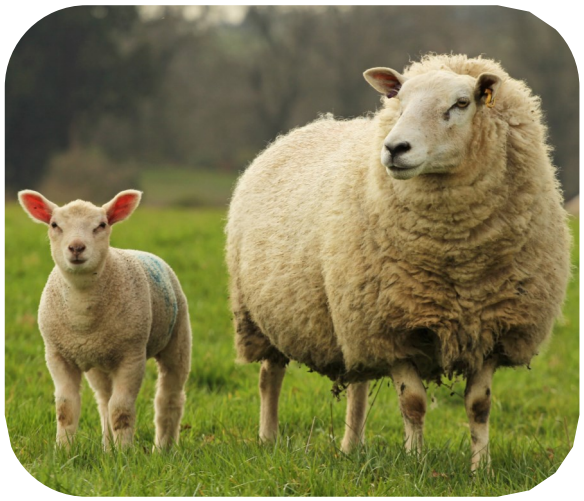
Worms by Jennie Lomas BSc (Hons) BVSc MRCVS



Worms can have disastrous consequences on production and health. They can permanently damage guts, severely impair growth rates and carcass quality and can lead to a significant amount of death. It is estimated that the increased cost of finishing reduces the financial returns by approx. £10/lamb. All farms need a control strategy. However, instead of worming at set ages or dates, it is definitely worth considering faecal egg counts (FEC) to determine the worm burden on your farm and thus the need to treat. Not only will this reduce the chances of building up anthelmintic (wormer) resistance on your farm, but reduces unnecessary cost. A FEC gives an indication of the number of adult worms in the gut of a sheep. It is measured as eggs per gram (epg) of faeces.

Reducing anthelmintic use in ewes

Fit, healthy mature sheep have good immunity to most species of worms, so there should be very few worm eggs in their faeces and so the need to treat adult sheep is limited. Traditionally, sheep farmers have wormed ewes twice a year; pre-tupping and around lambing time. However, this is usually unnecessary, adding cost and speeding up the development of anthelmintic resistance on the farm.

The key to knowing whether a ewe needs worming or not is her body condition .

- ***Ewes pre-tupping*** - The only ewes that may benefit from being wormed before being mated are those that are lean or immature, i.e. ewe lambs and shearlings.
- ***Ewes at lambing*** - The stress of late pregnancy and early lactation makes the ewe's immunity to worms wane, allowing her to shed more worm eggs in her faeces than usual. This is known as the 'peri-parturient rise' and is the main source of contamination of pasture for lambs later in the season. By leaving 10-20% of the fittest mature ewes untreated, it will reduce selection for wormer resistance (because not all the worms are exposed to the treatment), while still reducing the level of pasture contamination. Treat ewes as close to lambing as possible. You can use the results from the FEC to monitor the rise in egg output, and thus plan the right time to treat.

What is anthelmintic resistance?

A worm is said to be resistant when it can survive exposure to a dose of an anthelmintic that would normally kill it. This ability to survive is genetic. This means it is inherited by the next generation, so when these worms are left alive in the sheep, the eggs they produce, which become shed in the faeces will contain only resistant genes. So the worm population that subsequently develops on that pasture will be resistant. Over time the proportion of the worm population carrying these genes increases, and the process is not reversible beyond the point where they represent more than about 50% of the population. This is because there are not enough susceptible genes left to dilute the resistant ones when the worms mate. Detecting resistance of worms to anthelmintics at an early stage, allows farmers to maintain good worm control and avoid losses in production associated with declining product efficacy.

Three key factors to manage the speed of resistance developing on your farm:

1) Do not import problems – quarantine and treat all new additions to the flock.
2) Make sure treatments given are always fully effective – follow SCOPS principles (www.scops.org.uk). - Use the NADIS parasite forecast to determine when there is a period of high risk - (http://www.nadis.org.uk/parasite-forecast.aspx).
3) Avoid unnecessary treatments (use FEC to target treatments) and highly selective practices (such as 'dose and move' onto clean or low challenge pastures).

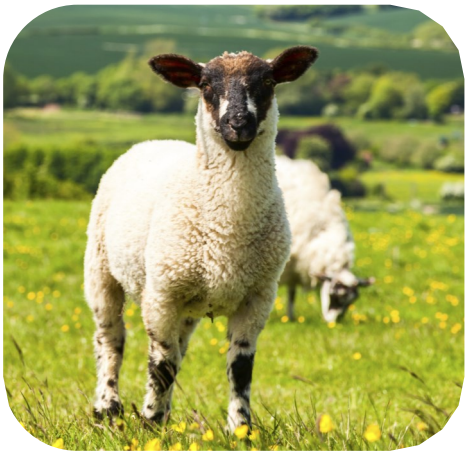
Breeding for resistance to worms

Some pedigree producers are breeding for a FEC Estimated Breeding Value (EBV). This means the progeny of their rams has an enhanced ability to resist worm challenges once their immune system starts to work. This is particularly useful when breeding female replacements.

Nematodirus battus– a major risk to lambs

This spring/early summer is forecasted to be a problematic year for Nematodirosis caused by the small intestinal worm Nematodirus battus. Nematodirus is a lamb to lamb condition, so lambs pick up the parasite from grazing land grazed by young lambs in the previous year. The eggs passed out by lambs last year need a cold spell followed by increasing temperatures to hatch. Young lambs 4 – 8 weeks old are at greater risk of disease. The clinical signs to look out for are sudden onset watery scour with lots of faecal staining of the wool. Affected lambs get severely dehydrated and rapidly lose weight. Death rates may reach 5% in affected lamb crops and those lambs that do survive take months longer to be fit for slaughter.

Benzimidazoles (white wormers) are the recommended treatment for this worm.



Jennie qualified from Liverpool Vet School in July 2015 and has joined the practice as the new Intern. Her parents have a beef and sheep farm in Cheshire. Before heading to vet school she worked as a scientist in a pathology laboratory.

Jennie enjoys all aspects of being a farm vet but is particularly looking forward to working with the sheep farmers in the area.

In her spare time she enjoys cycling, netball and walking with her scruffy border collie, Lucky. This year Jen completed the full length of the Tour de Scarsdale on behalf of the farm team and was very pleased to be rewarded with a burger upon her return!