



# WENSUM VALLEY VETS NEWSLETTER

## Understanding *Haemonchus contortus* in Sheep and Goats: Prevention, Diagnosis, and Treatment

With recent spring rain and warm weather, the risk of parasitic infections in sheep and goats increases. *Haemonchus contortus* (commonly known as the barber's pole worm) stands out as one of the most significant threats to small ruminant health. This highly pathogenic gastrointestinal nematode can cause severe anaemia, reduced productivity, lowered growth rates and even death if left untreated.

### What is *Haemonchus contortus*?

*Haemonchus contortus* is a blood-feeding roundworm that resides in the abomasum (the fourth stomach compartment) of sheep and goats. It is named for its distinctive barber's pole appearance made up of the female worm's red intestine spiralling around its white reproductive tract.

### Why is it so Problematic?

**Blood Loss:** Adult worms attach to the stomach lining and feed on blood, leading to anaemia and associated illness/weakness

**Rapid Lifecycle:** The worm can complete its lifecycle in as little as 3 weeks under warm, moist conditions, leading to rapid reinfection

**Resistance:** There are increasing reports across the UK of anthelmintic resistance make it challenging to control

**Slow Detection:** The signs can be subtle and diarrhoea is not usually a feature unlike other gastrointestinal worms



## Micron Machine

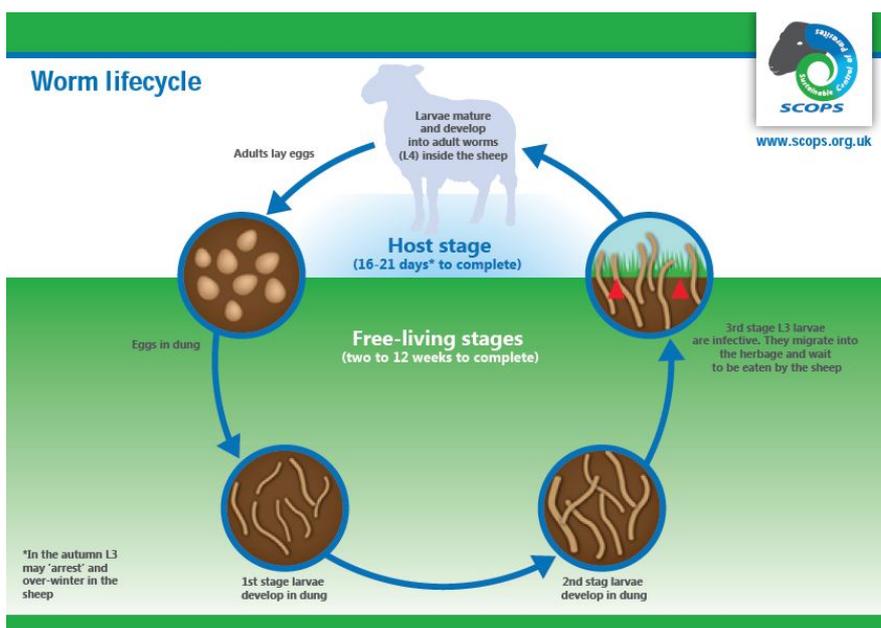
The practice has invested in the newest technology in worm egg counting, a Micron testing machine. It boasts improved accuracy and precision, and is developing technology specific to birds and alpacas! We are pleased with its green credentials, and it has significantly reduced the single use plastic in the worm egg counting process!



## Clinical Signs to watch out for

- Pale mucous membranes (gums, conjunctiva) due to anaemia
- Weakness and lethargy
- “Bottle jaw” (submandibular oedema caused by low protein)
- Sudden death in severe cases
- Weight loss and reduced appetite

## Lifecycle



## FAMACHA® System

Clinical Category	Eye Lid Color	Packed Cell Volume/PCV	Treatment recommendation
1	Red	≥ 28	No
2	Red-Pink	23-27	No
3	Pink	18-22	?
4	Pink-White	13-17	Yes
5	White	≤ 12	Yes

## Diagnosis

Faecal/Worm Egg Count (FEC/WEC): Detects worm eggs in faeces and helps gauge the burden of adult worms

FAMACHA Scoring: A practical field tool assessing eye membrane colour to estimate anaemia severity caused by Haemonchus worm. Subjective assessment of mucus membrane colour can also be an indicator

Packed Cell Volume (PCV): A blood test that measures the level of anaemia

*If you are concerned about Haemonchus in your animals, please call us on 01328 864444 or bring us a faecal sample for worm egg counting.*

