



WENSUM VALLEY VETS NEWSLETTER

Protecting Your Flock from Blowfly Strike

Blowfly strike is a serious and potentially fatal condition in sheep, caused by the larvae of several fly species - *Lucilia sericata* (greenbottles), *Phormia terrae-novae* (blackbottles), and *Calliphora erythrocephala* (bluebottles).

The Blowfly Life Cycle

Blowflies overwinter in the soil as pupae and emerge as adult flies in spring when temperatures begin to rise. Female flies lay eggs on vulnerable areas such as:

- Soiled fleece ("dirty back ends")
- Foot rot lesions
- Open wounds



Eggs hatch within approximately 12 hours, and the emerging larvae (maggots) feed on the sheep's tissue. Over the next 3 to 10 days, depending on the weather, they moult twice before reaching the third stage. At this point, mature maggots drop to the ground to pupate - continuing the cycle.

During summer, blowfly populations peak. The full life cycle from egg to adult can take less than 10 days. These maggots are aggressive feeders, causing tissue damage and releasing toxins that can result in systemic illness or death if left untreated.

Reducing the Risk

Prevention is far better than cure. You can reduce the risk of blowfly strike through good flock management practices:

- Control internal parasites to prevent scouring and dirty back ends
- "Dagging" or "crutching" (shearing the fleece of the rear-end short) helps reduce faecal build-up
- Maintain hoof health to prevent foot rot and scald, which can attract flies



Chemical Protection Options

There are several effective chemical treatments that help prevent or treat blowfly strike:

Dicyclanil-based Products

These are preventative only and do not treat active cases.

Clik products are Insect Growth Regulators (IGRs), preventing development of second and third stage maggots.

Applied early in the year they bind to the fleece lanolin and stop larvae from developing into harmful stages.

It is very important to dose accurately according to weight and apply as directed.

Organophosphate (OP) Dips

Treat and prevent blowfly strike as well as other external parasites.

Offer up to 60 days' protection.

Note: Sheep should not be shorn within 3 months of treatment (as per safety guidelines), OP dips are specifically licensed for use in plunge dips, not in showers or 'jetters', off-license use is not allowed by law.

Cypermethrin-based Products (e.g., Crovect, Ectofly)

Can treat active strike and offer 6–8 weeks' prevention.

Shorter meat withdrawal periods.

No restrictions on when sheep can be clipped.

Product	Meat Withdrawal	June	July	August	September	October
Clik Extra	40 Days	19 Weeks →	→	→	→	→
Clik	40 Days	16 Weeks →	→	→	→	
Crovect	8 Days	6 Weeks →	→			
Dysect	49 Days	8 Weeks →	8 Weeks →			
Ectofly	8 Days	6 Weeks →	→			

Treatment of Affected Sheep

When blowfly strike is identified it often needs immediate treatment by a vet, this may involve:

- Clipping and cleaning the affected area
- Treatment with an appropriate product
- Providing pain relief
- Examining other areas and animals for fly strike

For advice on blowfly prevention strategies or for information on the products we stock, please get in touch on 01328 864444

