Rosevean
VETERINARY PRACTICE

Farm Newsletter

Spring 2023

The use of faecal worm egg counts to reduce worm resistance

With spring finally here and the weather warming up, it is important to worm cattle and sheep effectively as we head into summer. With increasing resistance to wormers reported across the industry, we wanted to highlight the value of doing faecal worm egg counts. A reminder that this is also part of the Animal Health and Welfare Review funding!

Firstly, it is important to test if worming is required by sending in, [or asking our VetTechs] regular faecal samples from at least 10 animals. We can then perform a Faecal Egg Count (FEC) before you worm your animals to identify if they need worming and which wormer would be most appropriate. It is very beneficial to send in a follow-up sample 14 days post worming; except if you have used a wormer from the yellow group, "levamisoles" which is 7 days post worming. If this "post-worming" FEC does not show a 95% reduction of worm eggs, then there may be a resistance problem in your flock or herd. Our vets will be able to advise you on the most effective and appropriate worming plan for your farm using your results.

Resistance is a big problem.

Wormer resistance is the loss of sensitivity to a treatment in a worm population that was previously sensitive to the treatment / active ingredients. This resistance is passed on through generations of worms, as a genetic trait, so once it is on your farm it is likely there to stay. It's important to note, that it's not your livestock that have generated resistance, it's the parasites themselves. Bearing this in mind, a parasite control strategy based wholly around wormers is not sustainable – they are important products and so, just like antibiotics, need to be used with care so that we have them to use in essential situations.

In the sheep industry, resistance to the 1-BZ (white), 2-LV (yellow) and 3-ML (clear) group is increasing rapidly. Many wormers are not used effectively, because they are either given incorrectly, such as underdosing or by the wrong route. Under-dosing speeds up the development of resistance and wastes huge amounts of time and money as well as not effectively treating the animals.

The benefits of using regular FECs:

- Diagnose high worm burdens sooner – which will reduce production losses.
- Estimate the level of infection – which will allow you to monitor the need to worm saving you time and money.
- Allow you to target the timing of dosing – improving the effectiveness of treatment and productivity.
- Monitor whether the treatment has worked – do you need to dose again sooner or use a different product.
- Detect worm resistance.

In many cases, farm who use FECs to monitor worm burdens use less anthelmintic without any loss in performance saving money and withdrawal periods. If you know which worms you have on the farm you can target them more effectively and with the most appropriate product. This significantly reduces the chances of developing resistance on your farm.

Speak to your vet to discuss the benefits of faecal egg counting and how it would work best for your system to reduce your risk of building up resistance

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TB proof your farm

Bovine TB is the most devastating disease impacting many of our cattle herds today. Not because of the direct animal health and welfare impacts, the majority of reactors appear to be fit and healthy animals, but because of the massive impacts a breakdown has on the farm business and the knock-on effects on animal and farmer health and welfare.

TB arriving on the farm has many risk pathways that are out of our control, for example, we cannot control what our neighbour buys in or what area of the country we farm in, but TB is an infectious disease which just like Johne's, BVD, abortion, lameness, and calf pneumonia, has routes onto farm and around the farm we can control to reduce if not eliminate.

Private vets through the TB Advisory Service in England offer FREE TB advice for farmers in a bespoke way to help them assess in the ways TB could arrive on their farm and how it could continue to cycle once on farm and advise how to reduce, if not eliminate, these risks through simple cost-effective evidence based interventions.

The TB Advisory Service covers six risk areas, and discuss them all in relation to the farm, and explaining the science and evidence we have behind the risks.

1. Risk from the herd's own TB history.
2. Risk from the local situation
3. Risk from incoming livestock
4. Risk at pasture
5. Risk in the farmyard
6. Risk to the business

At the end of the free visit, four recommendations are agreed on. The top three recommendations agreed on farm are currently.

1. Install wildlife cameras.
2. Use badger proof licks.
3. Use ibTB map to assess risk from purchased stock.

To understand the risk cattle pose, it is important to understand the characteristics of the skin test. The skin test is very accurate at identifying truly infected animals. The TB skin test has a specificity of 99.98%. this means we are 99.98% certain a reactor is infected with TB. No visible lesions does not mean the animal doesn't have TB, it means it

is often early in the disease process and lesions are not detectable by the naked eye. At a farm level this is important as the consequences of a TB reactor are so massive; herd movement restrictions, and the animal is slaughtered.

The more recently a herd has had a TB breakdown the greater the chance is of having a future breakdown. Even though a farm is officially TB free based upon clear test results, it might not mean it is infection free. Your vet and/or TBAS adviser can talk to you about how to identify "risky" animals and how you can manage them differently to limit the spread of TB within a herd, exactly in the same way as you would with Johne's disease.

For incoming stock, the longer a herd has been testing clear the more you can trust the latest test is genuinely clear. Just like you would ask a herd's BVD, Johne's and Leptospirosis status and testing history before buying, ask about TB too. You can also find if they have had a recent TB outbreak and the status of the surrounding area on the ibTB map (in England and Wales).

What about Badgers?

Most badger and cattle interactions happen indirectly, this means that nose to nose contact rarely occurs. We do know that badgers share the same environment as cattle, as well as water sources and feed. Badgers especially like high starchy food such as maize silage and cattle cake. In certain areas of the UK, we know we have endemically infected badger populations. Found dead badger surveys have shown that in some areas 1 in 4 badgers can test positive to bTB, shedding the bacteria in their

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urine, faeces, spit, and pus from wounds. In these areas taking positive steps to limit badger and cattle contact by protecting feed stores (badgers can get through gaps of 7.5cm) and raising feed and water troughs (TB can survive in water for up to 60 days) to 1 meter (or using badger proof ones) will reduce your risk of a TB breakdown caused by badgers. Thankfully in Scotland, and certain areas of England and Wales we have no reason to suspect the badger populations are infected, in these areas we need to still engage in reducing cattle/ badger interactions to keep the badger population TB free, as TB is much harder to manage when badgers and other wildlife are infected.

Following simple evidence-based measures on farm can reduce your risk of and length of a TB breakdown, and the feedback from vets and farmers is that being part of the TB Advisory Service is rewarding and they felt they had taken back some control of their own TB risk.

To sign up for a free TB Advisory Service visit contact TBAS or the practice.

Make the most of the Animal Health and Welfare Review

As part of the Sustainable Farming Initiative set out by Defra, you can now register your interest and apply online for an Animal Health and Welfare Review. This review isn't to replace health planning but can instead be used to focus on a specific area on farm that will boost livestock performance, and therefore deliver better productivity for you.

What do you have access to?

Below are details of what funding is available in the review and what testing is required. We've also included some ideas of what you could use the review for. These are just examples, and you can work with your vet to identify the area of priority.

Dairy - £372 to include BVD testing (bulk milk) – Mastitis investigation, Calf Health, Lameness and Environment Review

(11 or more cattle)

Beef - £522 to include BVD testing (youngstock screen) – Infectious Disease Investigation, Biosecurity Action Plan

(11 or more cattle)

Sheep - £436 to include worm egg count sampling – Parasite Control Planning, Lameness Review

(21 or more sheep)

Pigs - £684 to include PRRS testing

(51 or more pigs)

Why should you get involved?

This scheme enables you to get free health planning advice and testing for your stock. Even if you are already testing for the required disease, there will still be benefits from the advice and review which can focus on different areas as above, and your current testing should be subsidised. It is also likely that trends identified from this first round of funding will shape future grants and schemes which should be beneficial in the future.

It's currently only available to farmers in England eligible for BPS with minimum required numbers of stock. Once you have registered your interest (via the QR code below), you will receive an email confirming your eligibility and inviting you to apply for the review. Before officially applying, please speak to your vet to ascertain the best time to carry out the review, because once you've applied, the review must be carried out within six months. You may already be carrying out the required testing, so make it fit in with what you're already doing.

Register here

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Efficient grassland management is key to profitability

In a period of higher input costs and lower farmgate prices your attention may well be turning to how you can find further margins. One way to do this, is to make the most of your grass through efficient grassland management.

Early spring grass will be more valuable than ever. Nutrition plays a fundamental role in prompting early livestock growth, and subsequent production. The dates have now passed for the end of the closed period for applying organic and manufactured nitrogen, but before you rush out and start spreading, consider taking soil samples to enable more precise application of nutrients. The savings generated from applying fertiliser where needed rather than blanket coverage can be very significant and more sustainable for the environment.

For farms targeting grass yields of over 10t DM/ha, 30 kg N/ha should be applied as soon as conditions allow, especially in the milder areas of the country, (Kingshay factsheets have full details). Not only should this grow more grass, but it should also help paddocks recover after grazing.

Nitrogen from slurry is at its most available during the spring and utilisation is further increased when applied via trailing shoe or shallow injection. Applying slurry to the paddocks with the lowest grass cover will reduce contamination when grazing.

Utilising Spring Grass

When it comes to cattle, utilising early season grass can reduce feed and winter housing costs. The earliest date cattle can be turned will be determined by availability of grass alongside the ground conditions. Walking pasture and visual assessment is essential. However, using a plate meter a few weeks before potential turnout, could mean that you achieve a timelier turnout, as measuring will be better that relying on visual assessment alone.

Ground conditions are also very important, putting animals out in wrong conditions can lead to poaching and damage to sward growth. The practice of on/off gazing with suitable stock can be beneficial, allowing some of the cost savings of grazing whilst reducing the risk of field damage. Avoid unrestricted grazing as this will result in selective grazing and is likely to cause a rapid decline in grass quality and DLWG or milk yield as the season progresses. With rotational grazing, you will ideally have grazed 70% by the end of March and have completed a full rotation by mid-April.

Using a plate meter regularly alongside grazing software allows you to predict your supply and demand of grass growth over the coming weeks to further improve your grassland management. Measuring early in the grazing season and regularly throughout ultimately helps you make better grazing decisions to get the most out of your grazing platform.

Visit the Kingshay website for the full range of soil analysis and plate meters available www.kingshay.com/shop/product/category/sampling-measuring/

If you would like more information on what we've discussed in this month's newsletter, please speak to any of our farm veterinary team.

Rosevean Veterinary Practice Ltd

Rosevean House, Coombe Road, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 3HU

t: **01736 362215**
e: **info@roseveanvets.co.uk** | w: **www.roseveanvets.co.uk**

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@RoseveanFarmVets