



Spring 2022

Parasite Matters



We have had quite a mild winter, with December, January and February all being on average warmer than usual. It has also been a relatively dry winter, with some exceptions in the Midlands. So, what does this mean for parasite activity? Temperatures in January remained lower than 10°, leaving most parasites inactive. However, particularly in the South of the country, temperatures rising over 10 were also paired with heavy rainfall – creating a warm and wet environment extremely favourable to parasite activity. In fact, SCOPS (Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep) started their annual nematodirus forecast earlier than usual.



As Spring approaches, our sheep and cattle will be susceptible to both ecto- and endo-parasites: ticks, blowfly strike (for sheep), biting and nuisance flies & coccidiosis, nematodirus (for lambs), GI worms and liver fluke.

Ecto-parasiticides

Starting with ticks. As for other parasites, tick activity relates to weather. However, all it takes is one sunny day in a sheltered spot so we can expect to see ticks almost year-round. The risk associated with ticks is the diseases that they carry – therefore, proper precautions must be taken. Avoid known tick hotspots if you can or preemptively dip sheep in Organo-phosphate (OP) or treat with an Synthetic Pyrethroid (SP) product.

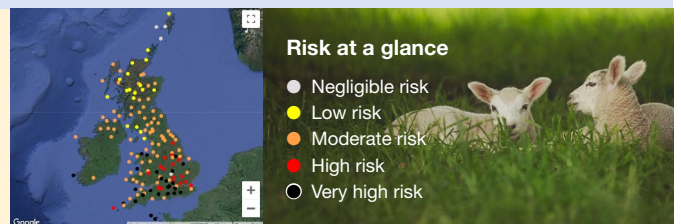
As temperatures stay above 9°, blowfly strike risk will increase. The threat starts off low, with a small number of flies in the first hatch but go on to multiply during the summer if they are left to breed and survive. As always, keep an eye on the NADIS and Farm Animal Health's blowfly tracker <https://www.farmanimalhealth.co.uk/blowfly-tracker> to know when the risk is rising and when to act.

Same goes for biting and nuisance flies – early action is key to reduce activity for the rest of the season.

Endo-parasiticides

Moving on to endo-parasites, one of the first challenges your youngstock may be facing is coccidiosis. Good immunity is acquired over time, so only naïve animals are at risk. Particularly, calves that have been housed longer or turnout in wet conditions. Hygiene, grazing management and targeted treatments should be part of your strategy to control coccidiosis.

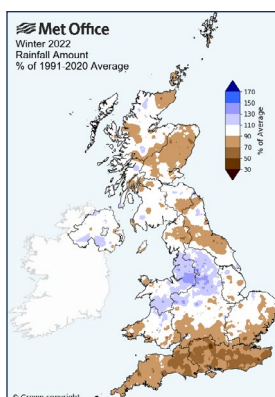
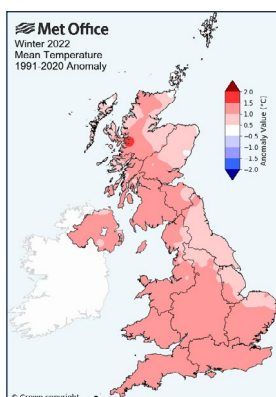
Nematodirus forecast is up and running and this is the forecast of the first week of April. We can see that risk is high and very high in the South, as the weather has been warming up, and low-to-moderate risk in the North. A Grp 1 BZ white wormer (e.g. Rycoben) is the treatment of choice for Nematodirus in lambs. These are short acting products so the timing of treatment is also important – i.e. when the risk is rising.



Due to the mild winter weather (not too hot, not too cold), it's likely that in some areas pasture larval survival rates will have been high (i.e. a lot of over-wintered worms). This can be a significant factor in the worm challenge now, in Spring, meaning there might also be other worms present at the same time as the Nematodirus challenge for cattle, young stock will benefit from early season monitoring as well.

Despite the mild autumn and winter, low snail numbers (as a result of the hot dry summer) meant the overall fluke challenge remained low. The main risk to consider now is the fluke that have survived any winter treatments inside the animals. Checking dung samples for fluke eggs will identify any groups still carrying fluke, and a targeted treatment with an adulticide (albendazole, oxclosanide or clorsulon) will remove these fluke, minimize the number of eggs reaching the pasture, and minimize the fluke challenge for the autumn.

**Weather Charts
Winter 2022**
Courtesy of the Met office



Be the first to find out the latest seasonal challenges to livestock by signing up to receive future copies of Parasite Matters by scanning the QR code with your phone camera.



For more information on the health of your livestock visit: www.farmanimalhealth.co.uk



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