



Liver Fluke Update – February 2014

The problem with liver fluke continues as the mild, very wet winter continues to add fuel to an already roaring fire. If the weather stays mild we will have a significant number of overwintered parasites leading to re-infection and the likelihood that the 2014 grazing season will start with a high challenge.

Awareness of liver fluke has improved significantly among farmers in the last couple of years. However, there is still much misunderstanding with regard to the use (and mis-use) of flukicides. Unfortunately, many of the problems experienced are simply the result of overestimating what the flukicides can do. The main issues are:

- Remember that flukicides have no residual effect. Treated animals put back on to contaminated pastures will immediately pick up more infection and will need to be re-treated.
- Don't assume you have Triclabendazole (TCBZ) resistance without testing and jump straight into using other products that do not kill very immature liver fluke. If you do have to change then animals normally have to either be treated twice OR, if appropriate, treatment delayed until 6 weeks post-housing.

An all too common scenario is where ewe lambs are bought in from 'flukey' areas. Some people have heeded advice to change from TCBZ as a quarantine treatment, but only did 1 x closantel or nitroxylnil last autumn, and have then either left it too long or forgotten altogether to re-treat them. Many are now paying the price.

You also need to think about spring/summer treatments with adulticides to break the cycle of transmission and reduce contamination levels for this autumn. There was little uptake of this last year. If it is going to have any impact we need to start talking about it **now** and it all needs **planning**. Marking a calendar with when you need to consider testing, re-treating or administering a spring/summer adulticide to reduce contamination could make a big difference.