Update – w/c 6 November 2017

SCOPS and COWS have teamed up to provide regular updates on liver fluke using all the information available across the UK.

The monthly updates are based on the NADIS parasite forecast and other information from industry contacts around the UK.

Feedback from around the UK in the last month confirms earlier warnings that livestock farmers need to be on their guard against liver fluke this autumn and winter. Predictions of a high risk of acute disease in localised areas of Western Scotland, and North Wales have been upheld with reports from the field with other areas of the country also reporting disease.

Reports in the last 2 weeks:

- Cases of acute liver fluke disease have been confirmed in **Western Scotland, Cumbria and Mid Wales.**
- Evidence of infection (determined by coproantigen test) has been reported in **North Yorkshire.**
- **Liver condemnations** (lambs) in one of the large Welsh abattoirs have increased from 1% of carcases in September to 2.8% in October. (In 2016 the increase was much lower (1% Sept to 1.8% in October) so this also suggests there is an increased challenge in 2017).

If you have information regarding positive test results or PMEs and are happy to share them then please go to the SCOPS website (www.scops.org.uk) and complete the very short questionnaire to help us fill in the picture across the UK.

Last month:

- *Cases of acute fluke in sheep confirmed in **Cheshire (late** September)*
- *Positive coproantigen results reported – in lambs in **South West Scotland***
- *Parasite Watch farms in **South West England** and **South West Wales** also had positive coproantigen tests.*

IMPORTANT ALERT

There are also a number of reports of farmers using white worming drenches (1-BZ) or other adulticides such as oxyclozanide, to treat animals this autumn. These products will only kill adult liver fluke. At this time of year most disease is associated immature liver fluke. Contact your vet or adviser to discuss product choice(s). More information is availalable on www.scops.org.uk and www.cattleparasites.org.uk/

Advice to Farmers

Livestock farmers are urged to:

- Check the fluke **forecast** for their area.
- Investigate any **sudden deaths** in **sheep**.
- Discuss **testing** (see below) and **treatment options** with their vet or animal health adviser.
- Where possible use **management** to reduce fluke risk, for example, remove sheep/cattle from the wettest fields or house early.
- Ask their **abattoir** for **feedback** on liver condition.
- Discuss **quarantine** protocols for new or returning animals with their vet.

Fluke testing options

Type of test	Test Result
Earliest warning **Fluke Antibody test** Blood sample to test for fluke antibodies. This will show the first signs of exposure to fluke. **NOTE:** • This test is most suitable for lambs/calves in their first grazing season. • It takes 2 to4 weeks for detectable antibodies to be produced. • Following a wet summer this test may be more appropriate for use in areas/farms with a low fluke risk.	**Positive** Indicates that the lambs/calves have met a liver fluke challenge already this year. However it does not tell us the level of parasite challenge, or whether it is likely to cause any clinical disease, or decreased growth rates in the near future. **Negative** No exposure to liver fluke yet. This would suggest that for this group at least, either it is too soon after challenge for antibodies to be detectable or there has been no liver fluke challenge, and that treatment is not yet necessary. Other groups on the farm could still be at risk, depending on the areas they have been grazing. On farms with a history of fluke, a repeat test 2-4 weeks later would be advisable. **NOTE:** Bulk tank milk can also be tested for antibodies to liver fluke.
Coproantigen ELISA Carried out on dung and is specific for liver fluke. This test detects the presence of active liver fluke infection when the volume of 'excretions' released from the fluke passes a certain threshold. It can detect fluke 2-3 weeks before eggs can be found in dung.	**Positive** Indicates an active liver fluke infection. **Negative** No fluke, or very low numbers, or young fluke which are so small that their secretions do not exceed the threshold. There could still be large numbers of immature fluke present.
Faecal Egg Count Fluke egg detection	**Positive** Egg laying adult fluke are present. **Negative** No egg laying adult fluke present. However, there could still be large numbers of immature fluke present.