



**10<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

### **Weaning Lambs? – Watch out for Worms!**

With grazing under pressure in many parts of the country following a very dry spring, many sheep farmers are looking at weaning lambs earlier than normal. 'Normally most lambs are weaned between about 12 and 16 weeks of age, but this can be brought down to 8-10 weeks given the right circumstances' says Lesley Stubbings. " Weaning is a very useful management tool, allowing allocation and prioritisation of the dry matter available, but it has to be weighed up against potential pit falls such as the challenge they could face from worms' She adds.

This year the dry spell has also had a significant impact worms. 'Eggs shed in the dung of ewes and older lambs are now sitting in dung pats, just waiting for the rain to allow them to complete their immature stages and emerge as infective larvae on grass. This is likely to be as a large spike once enough rain has fallen and earlier weaning could help avoid this, but only if lambs are moved away from the threat' says Lesley

SCOPS is advising sheep farmers to weigh up their options before weaning to ensure weaned lambs are moved away from grazing that could explode with infective larvae. Options include areas grazed by cattle grazing this spring or silage aftermaths (hay later on).

#### **SCOPS advice:**

- **Weigh up your options for lower challenge pasture for weaned lambs. Look at dry matter available, ewe condition etc. and plan ahead. If lower challenge grazing is not available you will need to wait. meanwhile monitor FECs and treat if necessary.**
- **Prioritise your groups. If you have been monitoring FECs so far then you probably know that some groups had higher counts earlier in the season – these are your hot-spot' areas.**
- **At weaning, take a FEC and drench if necessary but leave the lambs on the same grazing for 4-5 days. Take the ewes away. This also helps the lambs settle better before moving them on. DO NOT DOSE AND MOVE.**