

## **Farm Newsletter May 2020**

### **NEMATODIRUS FORECAST**

Nematodirus is a gut worm of major concern in lambs at this time of year. It causes nasty disease in lambs, causing a high number of mortalities and stunting the growth of many others. It can strike very quickly, particularly when there is a coldspell, followed by warm weather and a mass hatch. So you need to be on your guard – look out for signs (dirty back ends, poor appetite, increased thirst). Rapid action is often required and this has to be based on a risk assessment (more below) and the forecast for your area. SCOPS (Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep) have a live nematodirus forecast – please see <https://www.scops.org.uk/forecasts/nematodirus-forecast/>

This is based on the weather conditions at 140 stations throughout the UK. On 11th May, the stations nearest us are reporting as follows:

1. St Bees, (124m above sea level): **HIGH RISK** - Hatching is predicted to have started. Risk will peak within 7 days at this location but may peak sooner on some nearby holdings such as those at lower altitudes and with south facing slopes.
2. Keswick (81m asl): **HIGH RISK** - the period of peak risk has passed but significant numbers of larvae remain on pasture. Take action if you are grazing young lambs on contaminated pasture.

(NB South facing paddocks will give an earlier hatch, and with every 100m rise in sea level, the hatch will be delayed by a week)

#### **Main risk factors**

If your lambs are grazing pasture that carried lambs last spring **and** you answer yes to one or more of these questions, your lambs are at risk.

- Are they old enough to be eating significant amounts of grass? (generally 6-12 weeks of age but may be younger if ewes are not milking well).i.e lambs born early Feb-Mid March
- Do you have groups where there is also likely to be a challenge from coccidiosis? For example, mixed aged lambs are a higher risk
- Has there been a sudden, cold snap recently followed by a period of warm weather?
- Have you got lambs that are under other stresses e.g. triplets, fostered, on young or older ewes.

**Recommended actions:** If possible, avoid infection. Move at-risk lambs to low risk pastures in advance of the high risk period (i.e. pasture that **was not** grazed by lambs last spring).

- If you cannot avoid high risk pasture and decide you need to treat for nematodirus, SCOPS advises farmers to use a white (1-BZ) drench. It's crucial to dose to the heaviest lamb – weigh the lambs to check preferably and remember to calibrate your dosing gun. **The white drenches are still highly effective against this parasite on most farms and suitable for young lambs.**
- Check that treatment is effective by taking samples 7 to 10 days after treatment. Remember, it may be necessary to treat lambs more than once depending on the spread of ages in a group and subsequent weather conditions. Please phone the surgery to discuss what samples are required.

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