

Examine your parasite control now

This time of year is often critical for parasite control while animals are at grass. The current damp humid weather is ideal for high parasite burdens and the animals most affected by parasites will be calves in their first grazing season. Other categories of stock can also be affected too though. A good mid-season control strategy will ensure that animals will perform to their optimum and will also make parasite control easier at housing. There will be a certain amount of parasites on all farms. The main parasites to control at this time of year are stomach and intestinal worms (gut worms), lung worms and liver fluke. Rumen fluke may also be of significance on certain farms.

Observe animals

While animals are being checked every day they should be observed for clinical signs of parasites. These will mainly be ill-thrift, loose dung for gut worms and the distinct short sharp cough for lungworms. In more advanced cases of lungworm infection heavy breathing and panting may become evident.

Faecal Egg Counts

Faecal egg counts are very useful at this time of year to develop dosing strategies. Dung from 10-15 calves should be sampled, 8 weeks after turnout, to give a representation of the parasites present and also the level of infection. The results of faecal egg counts should be discussed with your vet and this information can be useful to select an appropriate dose.

Clean grazing

Silage after grass or new reseeds are also useful for parasite control during the summer. These will have less of a parasite burden, as well, the better quality grass will improve the nutritional status of the animals. Well-fed animals will have a better tolerance for these parasites. We used to think that animals should be dosed and moved to the "clean" pasture but this may increase the risk of resistance of the parasites to the dose. Now it is recommended to dose the animals and move them to the "clean" pasture 48 hours after.

Product selection

There are a wide range of products for dosing and product selection will be determined by many factors such as the type of stock being dosed and whether the preference is for an oral drench, pour-on or injection. Previous history of the farm in term of parasites and parasite control is also important. For instance a farm with a history of high levels of fluke may benefit from dosing for fluke now and there are products available for such a purpose. There are a few long acting products that give season long control of certain parasites which can be useful particularly if stock are going to an out farm. It is important to accurately weigh animals so that under or over dosing is avoided.