Faecal Egg Testing to Monitor Fluke Worms on Farm

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Faecal Egg Testing (FET) for fluke in adult suckler cows is an additional Optional Action selected by farmers participating in Beef Environmental Efficiency Programme (BEEP-S). The aim of this action is to increase awareness of diagnostic and/or testing methods to monitor worm levels and support a more targeted approach to treatment and use of anthelmintics or ‘wormers’ on farm.

A Focus on Fluke Parasitic Worms

Liver fluke is a parasitic disease of grazing animals caused by a flat worm (Fasciola hepatica). The inappropriate use or overuse of wormers, for example flukicides such as triclabendazole has led to the emergence of resistance. Therefore, good grazing and housing management, good observation of stock, post-treatment assessment and testing of effectiveness of dosing should form part of fluke control programmes. Consult with your own veterinary practitioner as to the best strategy and treatment for your farm.

Number of Faecal Samples Required for BEEP-S scheme

Farmers are required to submit one fresh faecal sample per cow from at least 10 cows which will be pooled into a single batch sample for testing. Samples are tested for the presence of fluke eggs indicating active infestation with adult fluke. Results will be reported to farmer directly and to DAFM. You should discuss your results with your own veterinary practitioner or agricultural advisor.
Key Date 1st November 2020

Select and contact a Department Approved Lab to request a sampling pack (empty sample containers, submission form and ziplock bags). Samples will be required to be taken and submitted to Approved Lab before 1st November 2020. A list of Approved Participating Laboratories can be found at www.agriculture.gov.ie/beeps/

How to take faecal samples on farm

Wear gloves and all faecal samples collected must be fresh. Cows should be placed in a clean pen. Rectal faecal samples should be collected directly into container provided by lab. If this is not possible then animals should be closely observed, and faeces should be picked up off the ground as soon as they are passed. Sample at least 10 cows placing their samples into individual sample containers. It is important that samples are clearly labelled and correspond to the correct animal tag number.
Sending faecal samples to the lab

Place faeces in container with screw-cap lid and then into a leak-proof ziplock bag. Place this bag containing the samples into a sturdy outer packaging, resulting in a three-layer packaging. Freshness is the most important aspect of good quality samples and ideally the samples should reach the lab within 24 hours. Do not leave samples in the sun and keep them cool. Do not freeze or place them in the fridge. Send samples at the beginning of the week and avoid samples being held over the weekend. The words ‘Biological Substance, Category B’ should be written on the outside packaging with UN3373 hazard symbol. Do not forget to include a completed laboratory submission form with all information requested.

Please see QR code with link to Teagasc Faecal Sampling Video.