



## Liver Fluke Update – March 2018

The prediction by NADIS\* for a high risk **of liver fluke disease** in North, West and central Scotland, West Wales and Cornwall this winter have been borne out by incidences recorded over recent months. The high-risk warning followed a year with one of the wettest summers on record and higher than average rainfall in many parts of Great Britain. The risk in Eastern Scotland, and parts of South West and Northern England is predicted to be **medium** and most of Central and Eastern regions of England were forecast to be at **low risk**.

\*NADIS - <http://www.nadis.org.uk/parasite-forecast.aspx>

Recent reports from [SAC Veterinary Services](#), APHA and others, support this general situation, but there are localised variations. This means it is very important that farmers talk to their vet, SQP or advisor to find out what is happening in their area, and decide what tests and risk assessment they need to carry out to investigate the situation on their own farm.

Now that we are into late winter we are seeing more cases of chronic and sub–acute liver fluke as the parasite matures in the host. Highlights of reports collated by SCOPS and COWS are as follows:

### Reports from around the UK:

- In Scotland, SRUC report that in terms of liver fluke incidence as a % of total submissions, 2017/18 has been the highest winter level since 2012/13.
- In Wales, numerous cases have been reported by APHA. In Jan/Feb, cases of chronic fluke in Western England and West Wales are reported.
- In Cumbria, cases of sub-acute and chronic liver fluke have been reported with chronic liver fluke in North Yorkshire. In the Bristol area, abortions in a flock have been associated with the presence of liver fluke disease.
- A large Welsh abattoir reports a further increase in lamb liver condemnations due to fluke was reported, rising from 2.8% in October to 5% in November and from 7.3% in January to 10.5% in February. This is significantly higher than the same month a year ago (7.8%) and underlines the fact that this winter is carrying a higher risk.

### Points to Note:

- Reports of disease continue mainly from high-risk areas, but farmers should seek local information, assess risk/use tests, use abattoir feedback and post mortems to inform on-farm control measures.
- Re-infection (when treated animals are put back on to contaminated areas) is still a concern. Farmers need to remember that fluckicides do not have any persistent activity. We also now need to be thinking about chronic / sub-acute disease as fluke mature and damage the liver.

- Poor scanning results may be the first indication that there is a liver fluke problem on the farm and may be limited to only one group of sheep depending upon the group's autumn/winter grazing history.
- Vets are urging farmers to make sure that clostridial vaccinations are up-to-date. Black disease is a major cause of losses in cattle (and sheep) that have livers damaged by liver fluke.
- While most cases of disease are associated with sheep, cases of liver fluke are being reported in cattle (11% of cattle submissions to SRUC have been associated with liver fluke disease this winter). It is essential that cattle farmers are aware of the risks and discuss sampling/testing/flukicide options for different stock with their vet to avoid disease.
- Product choice is critical – now that it is the latter part of the liver 'fluke season' we need to consider taking pressure off triclabendazole and swap to alternatives; closantel, nitroxylnil and products that kill adult fluke such as oxyclozanide, albendazole (clorsulon for cattle). Visit website addresses for more details. Note restrictions on the use of flukicides in milking cows ([http://www.cattleparasites.org.uk/guidance/COWS\\_Flukicides\\_product\\_table.pdf](http://www.cattleparasites.org.uk/guidance/COWS_Flukicides_product_table.pdf)).  
[http://www.scops.org.uk/workspace/pdfs/know-your-anthelmintic-groups\\_1\\_1.pdf](http://www.scops.org.uk/workspace/pdfs/know-your-anthelmintic-groups_1_1.pdf)