



**SUSTAINABLE CONTROL OF PARASITES IN SHEEP (SCOPS) and
CONTROL OF CATTLE PARASITES SUSTAINABLY
JOINT PRESS RELEASE
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**Sheep and cattle farmers warned dry summer may not have
killed off liver fluke**

The Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep (SCOPS) and Control of Cattle Parasites Sustainably (COWS) groups are urging sheep and cattle farmers to not be complacent about liver fluke this autumn. It would be wrong for producers, the groups say, to assume the dry summer has killed all the liver fluke parasite and the mud snails that are part of its complex life cycle.

Speaking on behalf of SCOPS, sheep consultant Lesley Stubbings says: *“This summer has been the hottest and driest on record in many parts of the UK. This means that, overall, the burden of liver fluke on pasture will be much lower than last season – but it is dangerous to assume this applies to all farms or even in all areas on a farm.”*

“Early diagnostic reports from labs and abattoir feedback in some areas suggest we must be careful. In a dry year, the infective stages of liver fluke will be concentrated around permanently wet patches, such as drinking points where there is moisture for snails, which of course is where animals congregate too.”

Experts from SCOPS and COWS say, in a dry year, it is even more important that each farm does its own liver fluke risk assessment and carries out monitoring and testing to avoid getting caught out. There will be huge variation between regions and farms. Tools available include specific blood tests, copro (dung) antigen tests and faecal egg detection tests. Both the SCOPS and COWS websites have details on when it is best to use these tests, and vets can advise on how to use them most effectively.

Speaking on behalf of COWS, Professor Jacqui Matthews says: *“Taking action now and using these tools will avoid losses due to fluke in high risk situations. Remember, on many farms where animals would normally be routinely treated, testing could help to avoid unnecessary treatments of animals that do not harbour liver fluke. This saves money and time and helps us protect the few medicines we have available to combat this parasite.”*

Watch out for regular updates from SCOPS and COWS as the autumn and winter progresses – and find more at www.scops.org.uk and www.cattleparasites.org.uk.