



FARMER LED, FARMER DRIVEN

ARGYLLSHIRE

Specialist Advice Report – Recommendations & Actions

Review of control of parasites in cattle and sheep



SPECIALIST ADVICE REPORT

Context and Background

SHEEP

1050 April lambing hill ewes. The flock is lambed outdoors being spread thin across the length of the farm's pastures and coastal grazing.

Ewes remain on the in-bye until weaning in August/September when they are then turned onto the hill until tugging. All replacements are home bred with 330 hoggs retained each year. Hoggs are wintered at home, snacker fed barley and 33% CP pellet at grass and summered on the hill.

All lambs, surplus to breeding, are finished on farm, sold from November to April at Longtown targeting 35kg on pasture, forage crops and creep.



CATTLE

225 Aberdeen Angus suckler cows calving from 23rd March. Bulls are in for 12 weeks with cows rotationally grazed around pasture fields.

40 heifers calve down at 2 years of age and are served one week before mature cows.

Cows have been outwintered for 10 years now with 100 wintered on sand dunes from mid-November to early March fed deferred pasture and feed blocks, whilst another 50 are wintered on free-drained fields being fed silage and draff and housed in February.

The remaining 70-75 are housed from the 1st November on silage and draff. Calves are wintered indoors from November on silage, barley, soya and draff to be sold at two sales at Islay UA, ~170 head, in March and April targeting 400kg.



Current use of anthelmintics are likely to be accelerating the development of anthelmintic resistance.

- Anthelmintic treatments are being given without determining if they are required.
- Limited post drench efficacy testing has been done to determine if anthelmintics used have been effective.
- Repeated use of combination anthelmintics (via drenches) in both sheep and cattle.
- Combination products used when single actives may be more appropriate. This 'off-target' use is likely to accelerate the development of anthelmintic resistance (AR) on farms because it will kill susceptible parasites unnecessarily.
- Same fields used for youngstock every year in both cattle and sheep.

Action plan / Recommendations

Diagnostic testing for parasites and specific recommendations for parasiticide treatments should be discussed as part of your herd and flock health plans with your private veterinary surgeon. Flock and herd health planning should be an opportunity to regularly manage farm health risks, to review what has happened and to set targets and actions.

The timing of diagnostic testing to determine if treatments are necessary should be agreed in advance, an action calendar may be of benefit. If treatments are necessary, the products used should be based on results of testing whilst taking into account the practicalities of application and availability.

When anthelmintic treatments are used, a worming treatment check should be performed to determine if the group of wormer used has been effective. It will be necessary to perform worming treatment checks on different classes of wormer in different years. his [guide from SCOPS](#) outlines best practice for worming treatment checks.

When it is considered necessary to give parasiticide treatments the “5Rs” should be followed:

- The **RIGHT product** for the type of parasite
- The **RIGHT animal**
- The **RIGHT TIME**
- The **RIGHT dose rate**
- Administered in the **RIGHT way**

The [AHDB Parasite Control Guide](#) is a useful document that outlines the active ingredients of products and which parasites they control as well as cattle and sheep treatment best practice.

Action plan/Recommendations – SHEEP

- ☛ Aim to leave at least 10-20% of ewes untreated around lambing and use BCS (rather than leaving singletons) to decide which require treatment. See this SCOPS note for further information. [2-7-5-treatment-of-ewes-around-lambing.pdf](https://scops.org.uk/2-7-5-treatment-of-ewes-around-lambing.pdf) (scops.org.uk)
- ☛ Use growth rates and/or faecal egg counts to determine the need for worming treatment of lambs.
- ☛ Ensure the same class of wormer is not used repeatedly and perform post drench efficacy checks.
- ☛ If sheep system reviewed, determine if grazing management can be used as an additional tool for parasite control
- ☛ Consider changing sheep system so that lambs are fattened early or not finished on farm and avoid the high-risk time for liver fluke.
- ☛ Rather than routinely dosing for liver fluke, take blood samples from lambs to check exposure to liver fluke to determine the need for and optimal timing of treatment
- ☛ Determine if triclabendazole resistance is present on farm and if it is, agree a plan with your private veterinary surgeon for treatment of liver fluke in high-risk years.
- ☛ Reduce number of tick treatments / showers as persistence of products should mean such frequent applications are not necessary.
- ☛ Can cattle be used to trample tick habitat?



Action plan/Recommendations – CATTLE

- ☛ Spring-born suckled calves that are still suckling their mother are not likely to require worming treatment for gut worms. Instead of routinely treating monthly with ivermectin, monitor growth rates and worm egg counts over grazing and only treat if necessary. Agree the most appropriate timing of sampling as part of herd health planning with your private veterinary surgeon.
- ☛ If worm egg counts were low in their first grazing season, replacement heifers may not have acquired immunity to gut worms. Monitor growth rates and worm egg counts of replacement heifers in their second grazing season to determine if treatment for gut worms is necessary. Be aware whether the pasture they are grazing is considered high risk, based on previous history of grazing.
- ☛ Calves may be at risk of lungworm particularly towards the end of the grazing season. Be extremely vigilant for clinical signs of lungworm infection (coughing, increased respiratory rate, loss of condition, sudden deaths) and treat promptly if necessary.
- ☛ If replacement heifers were not exposed to lungworm in their first grazing season, they could still be at risk of lungworm infection in their second grazing season. Consider vaccination against lungworm pre turnout.
- ☛ 2-3 weeks post housing consider blood sampling spring-born calves to determine if they have been exposed to liver fluke. If there is evidence of exposure to liver fluke, monitoring live weight gains can be used to decide if treatment is necessary immediately or could be delayed until the liver fluke are more mature and products against later stages of liver fluke could be used.
- ☛ Consider if treatment for inhibited *Ostertagia* is required at housing for retained heifers as well as calves.
- ☛ Results of sentinel calf serology could be used to determine the requirement for liver fluke treatment. If treatment is necessary consideration could be given to delaying treatment until the liver fluke are more mature and products against later stages of liver fluke could be used.
- ☛ Adult cattle are unlikely to require treatment for roundworms.



PLAN

-  Meet with your private veterinary surgeon on a regular basis to agree a monitoring plan (e.g. end of April, August and December). An agreed calendar of actions would be a useful output from these meetings.
-  Based on growth rates and testing results, agree if treatment is indicated and the most appropriate product(s) to use.
-  Where applicable post drench efficacy testing should be done.

The Farm Advisory Service (FAS) funded the Specialist Advice Report. Findings from the Integrated Land Management Plan (ILMP) for the Argyllshire Monitor Farm identified a review of control of parasites in cattle and sheep as a priority for the business.

The advice and report was undertaken by Helen Carty BVM&S Cert AVP (Cattle) MRCVS of SRUC Veterinary Services in conjunction with the farms veterinary practice, Islay vets. Helen visited the farm to discuss current practices and meet with the Management Group.

Helen has also been on hand to support the Archibald family and vet. This is an ongoing and evolving system for the farm business, and we are grateful to everyone involved.

This Specialist Advice Report was funded by the Farm Advisory Service. Farmers and crofters in Scotland can access a wide range of specialist advice. Find out more [HERE](#).





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