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## MAY 2022 NEWSLETTER

### FAECAL WORM EGG COUNTS (FECs)

As the weather continues to warm up and we then have some damp weather on top, we will quite rapidly see rising worm burdens on the pasture, and therefore an increase in the worm burdens within susceptible stock (predominantly lambs, goats of all ages, first grazing season cattle, and to a lesser degree second grazing season cattle).

Using FECs allows us to assess the worm burden within the livestock and appropriately time anthelmintic (wormer) treatments **BEFORE** clinical disease is encountered, ultimately leading to **improved health, welfare and productivity of the stock**. This is especially important in the case of *Haemonchus* in sheep and goats which does not cause scour, but very weak and anaemic lambs (or dead!), ewes and goats. On the other hand, treating before disease is seen *without* a FEC may be a complete waste of time and money, as well as leading to an accelerated risk of developing anthelmintic resistance (AR) on the farm. FECs should be repeated every 2-3 weeks for each group as the worm burden can change quite rapidly depending on climatic conditions and the stocking density of the pasture.



A FEC result prior to treatment also allows us to **assess the efficacy of the anthelmintic used** as we can repeat the FEC one-week later (for 2-LV products) or two-weeks later (for 1-BZ, 3-ML, 4-AD, 5-SI): the egg count should have fallen by at least 95%. This will be a **requirement** on sheep farms moving forward that enrol with the new **Animal Health & Welfare Pathway grant scheme that is launching this summer (SEE OVERLEAF)**.

FECs can also ensure the **correct diagnosis** for the cause of any scour identified, for example differentiating a worm burden from a coccidiosis burden. This is especially important when the treatment requirements are different: getting this wrong could lead to loss of time and money by using an unnecessary product, and ultimately a loss of performance in the stock.

We are excited to announce that we have just opened a small **Farm and Equine office in Holsworthy** as we have increasingly been serving clients in this area. It is situated in the town square, adjacent to the walk through to the main carpark. It will be open Monday to Friday, 9am to 2pm for drug collections. A direct phone line to the office is available on 01409 660633.

**Remain vigilant for fly strike as the weather warms up.** Best fly control throughout the summer relies upon optimum timing of preventatives and “getting” ahead of the fly population. Remember we are now supplying the full CLiK range for sheep, as well as Flypor and Fly Tags for cattle at competitive prices.

**Vet Jamie Gamble** had a successful return to Surf Kayak competitions over in Ireland last weekend, placing second overall. Next up is the World Championships in Bude!



## ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE PATHWAY – PART OF DEFRA'S NEW SUBSIDY APPROACH

You will all be aware that the SFP subsidy is being wound down, to be partly replaced by Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMs) and other initiatives – one being the **animal health and welfare pathway**.

Pathway is designed to help farmers bolster the health and welfare of their stock, whilst at the same time improving their bottom line. Over the last couple of years, a group of farmers, vets (including Jonathan), specialists and civil servants within DEFRA have been working together to put this together. It is currently going through a small trial phase before being rolled out properly later this summer – unfortunately this is some months behind schedule.

**What is Pathway?** It will consist of a fully-funded vet visit of around two hours (including report writing) which farmers will receive on a yearly basis. Farmers' own vets will carry out diagnostic testing (subsidised to certain amounts) and provide bespoke advice on management to improve the health and welfare of their animals. They will also be signposted to other financial support to improve health and welfare. This includes help to control endemic disease in their herd or flock; invest in sustainable approaches that mitigate impact on the environment; or improve the environments in which animals live. This review will support improved understanding of health and welfare priorities on individual farms and nationally.

**Am I eligible?** The offer will initially be available for all commercial cattle, pig and sheep farmers in England who are currently eligible for the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) who have *more than* 50 pigs, 20 sheep or 10 cows in total. Funding will be paid for each species per farm at the rate of: pigs - £684; sheep - £436; beef cattle - £522; dairy cattle - £372. Access to other aspects of the Pathway however, such as capital grants, are not limited by BPS eligibility from the outset. The Pathway will therefore enable farmers to adapt their business strategy accordingly and access alternative provisions.

The annual visit will also enable the vet to work with the farmer and farm team on everything from biosecurity to sustainable use of antimicrobials. Later in the Pathway, capital grants for farmers will be awarded based upon criteria defined by Defra through the co-design process and support for farmers from vets and the vet-led team. The Annual Health and Welfare Review will be the first part of the Pathway to launch, but it may not be essential for every farm, so for some, it may be that e.g. grants will be their first interaction with Pathway.

**Anything else?** Some degree of diagnostic testing will be undertaken for each species, which will initially focus on identifying priority endemic diseases or conditions in cattle (Bovine Viral Diarrhoea), pigs (Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome virus) and sheep (anthelmintic resistance). These priorities have been co-designed with industry, to ensure they focus on health issues that matter to farmers, as well as delivering benefits for the national herds or flocks and environment.

You will be encouraged to upload medicine usage and data to AHDB's E-Medicine Hub. The data collected will only be used for improving our understanding of the health and welfare of the national herd and flock. It will not be used by Defra for any regulatory or inspection activity. **Applications are not yet open** but will be soon. Be sure to keep up to date with press releases from DEFRA and through the usual farming press. **We plan to run an open-to-all farmer meeting as soon as the scheme officially launches to explain the process in full and (hopefully) answer and questions you may have.**

*Jonathan Hobbs, Director*



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