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Liver fluke in Cattle

The weather conditions this season have favoured liver fluke, and a nationwide increase in liver fluke disease has been observed. The symptoms in cattle can be quite vague, with reductions in production, growth, milk quality and fertility often being the only signs.

Screening your cattle for fluke infection would be worthwhile, and can be done in the following ways, depending on the age and type of stock.

Dung samples

This can be used in all classes of stock, and samples can be examined for the presence of fluke eggs. The best way of doing this is to take a pooled sample from 10 animals. Due to the intermittent excretion of fluke eggs and the fact that for the first 3 months of infection no eggs are produced, a negative result does not always mean absence of infection, but a positive result is definitive.

Bulk Milk Sample

This can be used in dairy cattle and can be tested for the presence of fluke antibodies. A negative result indicates no exposure, whilst a positive sample indicates exposure it can be difficult to ascertain if infection is current or historic, although high levels indicate more recent infection. However, in practical terms a positive result would indicate a treatment programme to be worthwhile.

Blood Sampling

This can be used either on an individual basis or as a screen. This method suffers from the same problem as a bulk milk test in that a positive result can be given some time after infection, but again if a positive result is given then a treatment programme should be discussed.

Treatment

PLEASE NOTE THAT TRODAX SHOULD NO LONGER BE USED IN DAIRY HERDS.

The licence for Trodax is currently under review, and we understand that when this is completed Trodax will achieve a 60 day withdrawal for milk making it suitable for use at drying off. However until this is clarified we have to advise as per current data sheet, which states it cannot be used in pregnant animals intended to produce milk for human consumption.

The choice of treatment should be discussed with us, as using the wrong product at the wrong time can be inefficient, and the choice of treatment in dairy stock is limited and needs careful consideration.

Below is a table showing a range of products currently available for treating fluke in cattle.

For dairy cattle the choice is limited, and often the only practical way to treat and avoid milk withhold is to dose at drying off.

For all classes of stock careful selection of product is required to ensure that the correct product is used to kill the most amount of fluke and reduce egg output – this will depend on time of year, housing, age of stock etc. Please contact us to discuss the best programme for your farm.

Name	application	milk withhold	meat withhold	dose	Age of Fluke Killed	Fluke/Worms/ Ectoparasites	Size	Cost	Cost/100kg
Trodax (Nitroxylnil)	Injection	not for use in pregnant dairy stock	60 days	3mls/100kg	7w k-Adult	Fluke Only	250ml 1 litre	37.48 131.13	0.45 0.39
Fasinex 10% (Triclabendazole)	Drench	not for use in cattle producing milk for human consumption	56 days	12mls/100kg	2w k-adult	Fluke Only	5 litre 2.2 litre	133.62 75.38	0.32 0.41
Fasinex 240 (Triclabendazole)	Drench	60 days pre calving	52 days	5mls/100kg	2w k-adult	Fluke Only	5 litre 2.2 litre	260.61 134.9	0.26 0.31
Closamectin Pour On (Ivermectin / Closantel)	Pour On	60 days pre calving	28 days	10mls/100kg	7w k-Adult	Fluke and Worms Lice and Mange	5 litre 2.5 litre 1 litre	358.78 184.31 103.74	0.72 0.74 1.04
Closamectin Injection (Ivermectin / Closantel)	Injection	60 days pre calving	49 days	4mls/100kg	7w k-adult	Fluke and Worms Lice and Mange	500ml 250ml	71.65 47.06	0.57 0.75
Cydectin Triclamox (Moxidectin / Triclabendazole)	Pour On	not for use in pregnant dairy stock	143 days	10mls/100kg	7w k-adult	Fluke and Worms Lice and Mange	5 litre 2.5 litre	408.82 222.43	0.82 0.89
Ivomec super (Ivermectin / Clorsulon)	Injection	60 days pre calving	35 days	2 mls/100 kg	Adult Only	Fluke and Worms Lice and Mange	1 litre 500ml 200ml	218.66 115.34 61.08	0.44 0.46 0.61
Combinex cattle (Levamisole / Triclabendazole)	Drench	7 days pre calving	56 days	10 mls/100kg	2w k-adult	Fluke and Worms	2.2 litre	130.17	0.59
Ovispec (Albendazole)	Drench	60 hrs	14 days	10mls/100kg	Adult Only	Fluke and Worms	5 litre	107.43	0.21

Schmallenberg Virus Screening

There is now a serological test available for the detection of Schmallenberg virus.

This means we can blood test cattle to check for exposure to the virus.

We are being encouraged to test suspected cases of acute disease in cattle, i.e. cattle that fit the following criteria:-

Lactating Dairy Cows – milk drop (greater than 25% loss of yield over 1 or more days) AND pyrexia with or without diarrhoea, in 3 or more cows in a one week period.

All other Cattle – pyrexia AND diarrhoea in 2 or more animals over 3 months of age, in a 1 week period.

It is suggested that samples are tested at the acute stage for virus (PCR) and antibodies, and 3 weeks later to look for a rise in antibodies..

Unfortunately, as Dorset is already an infected county, the cost of these tests is not subsidised/free so you would be charged for these tests.

Prices would range from £16.50 - £28.90 per animal if tested by the AHVLA guidelines. This variation is because if Schmallenberg is identified by PCR at the first test, then further serology is not required.

An alternative would be to just test suspect animals 3-4 weeks after a suspect outbreak and do a single test for antibodies at a cost of £4.20 per sample. A positive result would indicate previous exposure to Schmallenberg, but would not necessarily mean it had caused the symptoms, a negative test would rule it out as a cause.

Currently little can be done to treat or prevent the virus from affecting your cattle (although fly control may help), although there is hope of a vaccine in the not too distant future.

Calves born with the classic deformities can still be sent for analysis, however this is also now a chargeable test. Again, the Dam of affected calves could be tested for antibodies to look for exposure to Schmallenberg virus, but a positive would not necessarily mean it had caused the deformities. A PCR test on brain from affected calves would cost £16.50.

If you wish to discuss any of these points or need further clarification please contact us.

E Mail Addresses

We are trying to use e mails to send newsletters where possible. If you would like to receive newsletters by this method please provide us with an up to date e mail address.

You can do this by simply sending an e mail to

office@damoryvets.co.uk

Please state who you are as it is sometimes difficult to match e mail addresses to clients. Thank you for your help in this matter.