



## Animal Disease is an Ever Changing Picture

### Background

In recent years we have seen an upsurge in cases of liver fluke disease in cattle and sheep (see Fig 1). We have also seen an increase in parasitic gastro-enteritis (PGE) in sheep. The pig industry has seen two new diseases PMWS and PRRS. Poultry farmers are very concerned about the new strain of avian flu. Monitoring these trends is called "disease surveillance".

### SAC Veterinary Services

The eight SAC Veterinary Disease Surveillance Centres in Scotland work in partnership with the local veterinary practices to:

- Assist veterinary surgeons in practice obtain a specific diagnosis in the case of a disease outbreak.
- Provide information on disease trends to alert veterinary surgeons, farmers and government to new and emerging disease and changes in the occurrence of existing disease of animals.

### How to use the service

You may have made use of this service already. For example your veterinary surgeon may have taken blood samples, swabs or dung samples from your animals and sent them to one of our Disease Surveillance Centres. In addition these Centres offer a comprehensive post mortem examination service. This service is heavily subsidised by the Government so that a full examination costs between £20 and £40 for a sheep or abortion material, including disposal of the carcass. The rules of thumb to decide

when a carcass should be submitted to the laboratory for a post mortem examination are:

- More than one death in a group in a week.
- Series of unexplained deaths or illness.
- Over 3% of flocks/herd abort on more than one abortion per week.
- Failure of response to veterinary treatment.

If you require to use the post mortem service, you should first contact your vet and they will alert the appropriate laboratory to the fact that you are bringing in material for examination. The benefit of an accurate diagnosis can be considerable when it allows appropriate and effective treatment of disease.

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### SAC Veterinary Services Disease Surveillance Centres

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Figure 1

**Liver Fluke Outbreaks as %age of diagnosable submissions**

