

Information Notes

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Plan to Protect your Flock's Health

Disease causes significant cost for sheep farmers. The risks of disease spread have been increased by the disruption to the orderly marketing of stock caused by the recent Foot & Mouth Disease outbreak. All sheep farmers must establish a quarantine programme for their flocks. Drug resistant worms are now common and easily brought onto your farm. Their impact through reduced performance and increased costs through the need to use more expensive wormers can be considerable. Sheep scab is highly contagious and easily spread. The cost of treating animals on introduction is many times less than treating the flock as a whole. Therefore **all** sheep farmers need to consider how they tackle these diseases. Recommendations are given in table 1.

For a breeding flock the cost of introducing diseases is greater. In addition to drug resistant worms and sheep scab, consideration must be given to CLA, Maedi Visna and the infectious causes of lameness. Recommendations on an approach to minimise the risk of introducing these diseases are given in table 2.

Caseous Lymphadenitis (CLA)

CLA is characterised by abscess of the lymph glands, often around the neck. However abscesses can also occur internally. The disease is thought to be widespread in terminal sire breeds and in an effort to stem the spread to other flocks SAC now provides a CLA Monitoring Scheme. This scheme certifies groups of sheep that are intended for sale where they have been shown to have no evidence of infection. While vaccine can suppress the disease, vaccinated animals may carry infection. Commercial flock owners would not wish to incur the ongoing expense of adding another vaccine to their health programme. On a positive note the new CLA blood test can be used to in an eradication programme in infected flocks.

Maedi Visna (MV)

The MV virus infects sheep at any age but the disease is seen in adult sheep where it causes pneumonia, wasting, and chronic mastitis. Purchasing apparently healthy tups is no protection because symptoms can take 2 to 4 years to appear. Sheep can be purchased from the 3,000 flocks tested in the MV Accreditation Scheme with confidence. There is evidence that increasing numbers of non-MV Scheme flocks (including hill breeds) are infected and therefore the danger of buying in MV infection with non-accredited rams is significant. Ask vendors of non-accredited rams about the MV status of their flocks.

Contagious Ovine Digital Dermatitis (CODD)

This relatively new disease of the foot is a major problem in some flocks. It usually starts as an ulcer above the hoof and penetrates down behind the horn to cause severe lameness and loss of the hoof. CODD does not respond to routine footrot treatments or the footrot vaccine. Observe all purchased sheep for lameness and inspect their feet during a 28-day quarantine period. Treat any showing footrot. Call in your vet if they do not respond or show symptoms of CODD. If he considers that CODD is a likely diagnosis, then the animals should not join the flock.



Inspect sheep at each foot-bathing

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SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

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Table 1

Action for owners of all flocks (including feeders)

Disease	Action to prevent spread into flock
Anthelmintic-resistant worms	Dose or inject with Macrocytic lactone (ML -Group3) (Injectable forms are scab-active too, see *below) and Levamisole (Group 2) one straight after the other. Yard for 48 hours if possible (24 hours minimum).
Scab & Lice	Dip, OR use a scab-active injectable*(ML - Group 3) and a few days later a pour-on to treat for lice. Keep isolated for 3 weeks. A second injection of a scab-active injectable may be required – see data sheet. (* Also kills worms – see above). Allow 14 days between dipping and drenching with a levamisole drench.
Fluke	If there is a high risk of introducing drug-resistant Fluke – treat sequentially (one straight after the other) with triclabendazole and closantel and keep off snail habitat for four weeks.

Table 2

Action for owners of breeding flocks

Disease	Action to prevent spread into flock
Caseous Lymphadenitis	Ask questions about flock of origin. Check head and neck for lumps. Less risk with young sheep (especially if not been shorn or trough-fed with older sheep).
Contagious Ovine Digital Dermatitis	Inspect sheep at each foot-bathing. Get advice if any damage or soreness above hoof and around cleft.
Enzootic Abortion	Not possible to identify latent infection. Either buy EAE accredited sheep or lamb separately for first year and monitor closely. (Discuss vaccination with your vet).
Footrot	Footbath with 3% Formalin or stand in 10% Zinc sulphate three times in quarantine period.
Maedi Visna	Purchase from a maedi-visna accredited or monitored flock is preferable to individual blood sample on purchase.
Scrapie	Consider the genotype of all purchases, especially rams.

Keep all new sheep in quarantine accommodation for at least 3 weeks

(Assistance from members of the Sheep Veterinary Society in preparing these tables is acknowledged.)

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