



# Highgate Veterinary Clinic

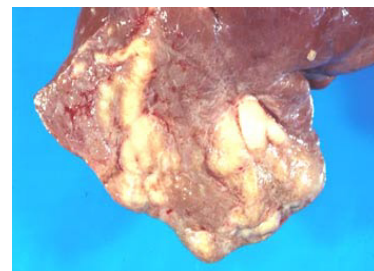
## Farmers Newsletter - October 2008

### Fluke Alert

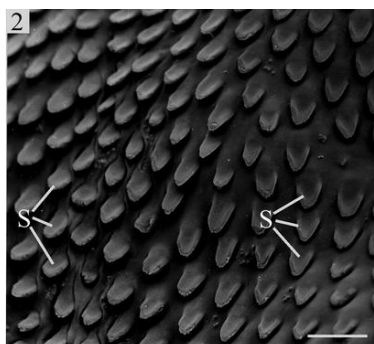
EBLEX are warning livestock farmers of the very high risk of fluke causing disease this year. Nationally, 50% of cattle livers and 26% lamb livers in the past 12 months have been condemned in abattoirs due to fluke damage. These alarming figures have been blamed on the wet weather in 2007. This year has been no better and so the situation can only be getting worse. We can safely say these figures are representative of the fluke levels on south Cumbrian farms i.e. at least half the cattle and a quarter of the sheep are infected.

Flukes damage the livers of cattle and sheep. In autumn, a heavy infestation in sheep can cause sudden death but the less obvious signs are in the chronically infected animal. The liver is the chemical factory of the body. Processing food, manufacturing blood and other proteins, storing and distributing trace elements are only a few of its functions. Young fluke burrow through the liver eating liver cells as they go. Adult fluke sit in bile ducts laying eggs, sucking blood and causing protein to leak into the bile. As a result, the liver's ability to function is impaired leading to poor thrift, poor production or inability to fight off infection.

Wintering sheep and outside cattle are most likely to show ill thrift or death but well fed milk cows are not immune. They are more likely to show vague signs of other diseases or just not milk as well as they should.



Liver damage caused by fluke



Spines on adult fluke

So how should you respond to this warning? Well the easiest but maybe the most costly is just to treat your stock with a flukicide which kills fluke of all ages i.e. Fasinex and Combinex. But before spending your money and time you may need convincing that treatment is necessary.

Testing muck samples for fluke eggs relies on adults being present and at this time of year that's not always the case and immature fluke can cause a lot of damage before they grow up. Blood tests for antibody levels only tell you if the animal has been exposed to fluke in the past, not if it is infected now. Feedback from the abattoir about the state of your stock's livers is a great way to know if you have a problem and post mortem examinations of poor or dead stock are also useful.

If the land is wet (and what land wasn't this year) then fluke are very likely. Rule of thumb is if there are rushes, the snails and the fluke are there too.

The history of disease on the farm is important. If stock have been affected in previous years, they will be again. Without great changes to grazing management, fluke will not go away. If you need to control fluke in your sheep then, unless the cattle are managed completely differently, the cattle need treating too, because the same species of liver fluke infects sheep and cattle.

If you would like any more advice on treating for fluke, please contact the surgery.

### Westmorland Show – A great success!

Although the weather is back to business as usual, it came up trumps for the county show. We had an enjoyable but exhausting day as people came to look at our exhibit of Jersey calves, take part in our unique lucky dip or just come to have a drink and chat with us. Many people have said they passed our stand but didn't stop to talk as we were so busy. If you did have something to chat about but didn't get the chance at the show, please just give us a ring or pop in to the surgery – the kettle's often on!

#### This Month: October



Worming youngstock with an ivomectin at turn in will kill worms and reduce mange and lice.



Semen test rams if there is any doubt of their fertility rather than lose time with breeding ewes later.



Vaccinate youngstock for pneumonia before it becomes a problem.



Look out for lungworm in all ages of cattle.



Look out for staggers