

# The Green Gazette



FARM  
Sep 23

## What are you buying in?

Buying in stock is a great way to bring new genetics on farm, but what else could be hiding in the animals you bring in?

- Infectious diseases
  - These may be active infections, such as pneumonia, which may bring new bacteria or viruses onto your farm that your existing stock have no immunity to.
  - Or these may be “iceburg” diseases that are harder to spot, show up occasionally as sick individuals but are usually widespread throughout the group. E.g. BVD, Johne’s, OPA, Maedi-visna.
  - Bought-in animals may be harbouring antibiotic resistant bacteria which can spread among your own stock.
- Infectious lameness- these hide in animals’ feet and can then get into the soil on your pastures or into sheds.
  - In sheep: CODD/Footrot
  - In cows: digital dermatitis
- New parasites- not all farms have every type of parasite living on their pastures meaning new species e.g. lungworm may be introduced onto farms in the faeces of bought-in animals.
- Anthelmintic (wormer) resistant parasites- these may be living in the guts of bought-in animals and eggs are shed onto your pasture, spreading them to your other animals.

### How do I protect my farm?

- Buy from high health-status farms. Look for farms that are part of a CHECS accredited health scheme. These are farms that routinely test their animals for diseases, are either free from disease or working towards eradicating it and have good biosecurity measures in place. Buy from as few different sources as possible.
- Quarantine bought-in stock for 3-4 weeks. This means in a separate air-space to your existing stock, ideally on concrete to prevent shedding of bacteria or worms on pasture. This allows time for clinical signs of any diseases an animal might be harbouring to start showing and allows us to treat conditions appropriately.
- Choose a safe method of transport- don’t let your high health status purchases mix with unknown animals on a transporter’s wagon!

### Welcome to our new vet Eilidh!

Eilidh (said ay-lee) joined us at the beginning of September having graduated from Edinburgh Vet School this summer. She grew up over the border in Ayr but has spread her wings and moved south to sunny Cumbria! Eilidh is excited to get stuck in with all aspects of the job, both on-farm and with our smaller patients. We’re very pleased to have her with us. Please be patient while she learns the ropes and make sure to say a wee hello when you’re next in!

- Blood test your bought-in animals to determine their disease status for the iceberg diseases mentioned above.
- Treat sheep with Zolvix AND a clear drench to clear out any resistant worms and stop these being spread to the rest of your flock. Keep on hard standing for 48hrs after treating.
- Dip or inject sheep for sheep scab or blood sample 2 weeks after arrival to check for exposure with antibodies.
- Footbath animals twice in quarantine with zinc sulphate solution.
- In autumn, treat for fluke with closantel and repeat in 6 weeks, keeping off wet pasture until 2<sup>nd</sup> treatment.
- Vaccinate to bring bought-in animals’ protection in line with the rest of the farm.

## Thinking about fluke?

The “acute” fluke risk period runs from the end of summer and throughout autumn. Acute fluke infections are related to the number of immature fluke migrating through livestock’s liver. Not all fluke products are effective against the immature fluke larvae.

Signs of acute fluke include:

- Sudden deaths
- Anaemia- pale gums/conjunctiva
- Respiratory effort
- Swollen belly/colic
- Fluid swelling beneath the jaw

How do we test/monitor for fluke?

- Antibody testing/sentinel testing- This is the best way to monitor the rise in fluke numbers on your farm to help you time your treatment accurately. Blood samples are taken regularly (e.g. monthly) from 10 first season grazers in each risk group. Treatment is needed when antibodies are found as this shows exposure to fluke has occurred. Antibody testing can detect fluke from 2wks post infection.
- Faecal coproantigen test- A faecal test that detects secretions from fluke in livestock dung. This test can detect fluke from 5-6wks post infection. Levels drop quickly when fluke are killed so a positive result reflects an active infection. Ideally 10 individual faecal samples are collected from each group.
- Faecal egg counting- This test detects the presence of adult fluke only, so is useful from 8-10weeks post infection. Egg levels can remain high for 3 weeks post treatment as eggs are shed intermittently in livestock faeces.
- Post mortem- Even if the animal likely died for another reason, this is an opportunity to assess the state of it’s liver and check for signs of fluke or the damage they cause- this animal’s liver will give you an idea of what’s going on in the rest of the group.

When and how should I treat?

- Flukicide use should be timed in response to results of the monitoring techniques explained above.
- If fluke has previously been confirmed on farm, timing of treatment should be judged by a combination of fluke forecasts and results from monitoring data.
- For acute fluke, triclabendazole is the only product active against immature fluke larvae. Resistance is being increasingly reported so it’s very important to use triclabendazole only when activity against immature fluke is required, taking care to ensure accurate dosing (avoid under-dosing).
- After dosing, move to a drier (lower risk) pasture or, if this isn’t possible, re-treat in 3 weeks.
- If adult fluke are involved in the infection, a flukicide active against all ages of fluke is needed. If animals can’t be moved to a lower risk pasture, re-treat in 5-8weeks

How can I prevent it?

- Avoid grazing high risk areas- these are areas where there is a lot of standing water providing habitat for the water snails involved in fluke’s lifecycle. Drain, fence off or plant trees in your wettest areas.
- Fence off water courses and provide an alternative source of drinking water for your stock.
- Quarantine new stock and treat to avoid bringing in resistant parasites.
- Avoid co-grazing cattle and sheep- unlike many of the intestinal worms, fluke will infect both cattle and sheep. Sheep shed higher numbers of eggs than cattle so their presence on pasture can increase the fluke levels more significantly.
- Monitor fluke levels in your stock using the techniques outlined above to ensure early treatment and minimise losses.