

The benefits of regular on farm FEC testing

Alan Cowan, Stamfordham, Northumberland

FARM DETAILS:

- 420 acre lowland farm
- Flock of 900 mules lambing end of March
- 50 cow spring calving suckler herd

SUMMARY RESULTS:

- Average 51 FEC tests / year completed
- Number of doses administered / year **reduced by 18%** on average*
- Confirmed white drench resistance.
- Changed timing of dosing and which groups dosed
- Seen differences from year to year. Demonstrated why we can't guess what's going on
- Some tests also done on cattle and has removed the routine worming of young cattle in midsummer.

Financial saving on purchase of wormers*

Annual saving on purchase of wormers	£251.58
Annual saving per adult ewe	£0.28
% reduction in wormer costs	22%

*Average of 2 years before start of project compared to average of 2 years after start of project



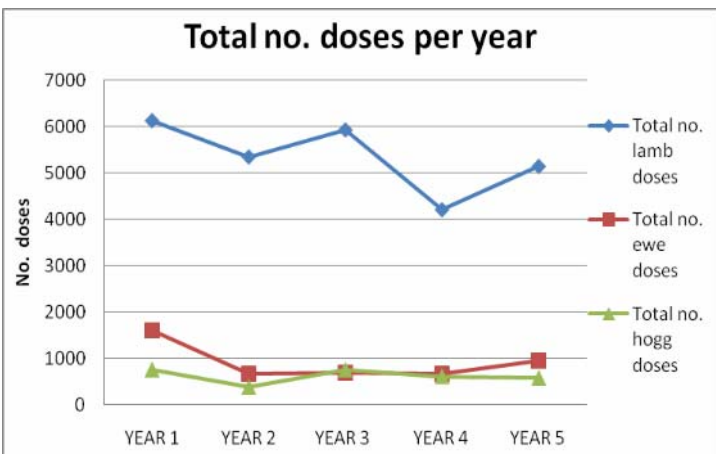
Ewe dosing:

Before starting the project Alan had already taken steps to avoid over dosing by removing the normal dose to all ewes at lambing and the fittest ewes before tupping. FEC monitoring then revealed egg counts rising pre-lambing so following advice from Innovis all ewes were dosed as they were turned out in order to reduce pasture contamination.

Failing to control this contamination in the past may explain why we have seen quite high worm burdens in the lambs over the summer. Reducing the contamination by ewes in the spring should pay dividends in the future with the gradual decrease of worm burdens on pasture.

Low burdens were recorded in ewes in the autumn (as expected) and this gave Alan the confidence to leave all ewes untreated – even the thinnest and youngest ewes weren't wormed after low FEC counts.

Even though the reduction in number of doses given on this farm as a whole has not reduced dramatically – there has been a significant shift in the timing of treatments for the ewes. A decrease in lamb treatments was replaced by a slight increase in ewe treatments which shows how FEC has helped target treatments.



* FEC monitoring started in year 3

* Data adjusted so that stock numbers were fixed across all years

LAMB PERFORMANCE	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5
Average carcass weight	21.08	20.44	19.84	20.78	19.59
Average days to Market	184	186	183	169	166
Average growth rate (kg/day)*	0.244	0.232	0.231	0.261	0.250

(*Assumed killing out percentage of 46%, average birth date for all lambs as 1st April and birth weight of 4 kg)

The summary of lamb performance has been calculated from records of lambs that have been sent to the abattoir.

The lambs in years 4 & 5 had better growth rates when compared to the first 2 years which resulted in the lambs being sold on average 17 days earlier. This could have a large influence on farm profits if the delay in sales coincides with a drop in price and the cost of an extra 17 days feed is taken into account.

There may have been a number of factors that have contributed to the increasing animal performance on the property through years 4 & 5, for example from 2005 onwards the farm started using performance recorded rams. However it can be seen that the changes made to the worming policy have not been to the detriment of lamb performance.

'Although saving on drench costs is a benefit, the greatest advantage I have seen is that I now have confidence in only worming when it's needed and I can hopefully delay resistance to the levamisole and ML groups'

Alan Cowan