

Top Ten Tips for Controlling Liver Fluke in Cattle



COWS

Control of Cattle
Parasites Sustainably

Sound and informed preparation will minimise liver fluke infections with positive effects on enterprise returns

Identify Risk	1. Identify high risk areas of fluke and consider if grazing these pastures in the late summer /autumn can be avoided. Practical steps include fencing off wet areas, attending to leaking troughs and pipes, drainage or even consider housing early.
	2. Ask for abattoir feedback on any liver rejections. This is a free and invaluable option for getting an early warning that there may be a fluke problem on a farm. Early action will minimise reduced performance due to sub-clinical liver fluke infections.
	3. Investigate losses in sheep if you have sheep on your farm, as this can be an indication of fluke risk for your cattle.
Treat Appropriately	4. Treat your cattle using the most appropriate drug, most suitable for time of year and management of cattle involved. Be sure to understand the product choices available in terms of the age or stage of liver fluke to be targeted because there are distinct differences in the effect of flukicides (see table overleaf). Consider meat and milk withdrawal periods as well. Only use a combination product if appropriate – at housing for example, when fluke, lungworm and gut worms may all need to be controlled, but check with your vet or suitably qualified person (SQP) and make it part of your parasite control plan.
	5. Always treat effectively. Under-dosing is a major issue, leaving parasites alive in the animal which will cause damage to the liver and encourage resistance to develop. Weigh, don't guess, and be prepared to split cattle groups if there is a wide variation in liveweight to ensure the dose rate is accurate. Calibrate equipment regularly for all means of administration (drench, pour-on or injectable). If the product is orally administered ensure the drench is delivered over the back of the tongue. Follow the prescriber and manufacturer instructions for storage and administration accurately.
	6. Consider if you need to reduce pasture contamination levels in spring/summer by using a treatment with a drug that kills adult fluke (see table overleaf) to kill egg laying parasites. This should be based on individual risk factors and abattoir feedback.
	7. Remember to repeat the treatment if necessary. If you leave cattle on infected pasture after treatment you may need to re-treat them in six to 12 weeks depending on the product you use. None of the flukicidal products are persistent so animals can pick up infection straight away after treatment.
Avoid Drug Resistance	8. Resistance to some flukicides is increasingly prevalent in sheep, so it is important to have an effective control plan for cattle that reduces the risk of resistance spreading. If you suspect resistance, arrange a drench test, i.e. a Faecal Egg Count Reduction Test (FECRT), with your vet/SQP.
	9. Quarantine all incoming stock (<i>sheep as well as cattle</i>) from potential fluke areas for liver fluke as well as roundworms. This will take considerable planning but failure to do it could result in <i>importing resistant liver fluke from another farm</i> as well as losses and/or reduced performance in the animals themselves. Refer to guidelines on the COWS/SCOPS website (www.cattleparasites.org.uk & www.scops.org.uk) and discuss with your vet/SQP.
	10. Be Prepared. Don't wait until the losses are mounting up. Act now to work with your vet or SQP to plan ahead in terms of management control options, treatments and monitoring that can be put in place.