

Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep

How Safe Are Your Sheep from Sheep Scab?



Contents

- Important facts you need to know about Sheep Scab
- The why and how of diagnosing sheep scab
- Effective treatments for sheep scab.



Important Facts About Sheep Scab



Sheep to sheep contact is the main source of disease spread, but contaminated trailers and lorries are also a risk.



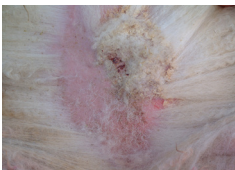
The mites can live in wool tags for up to 16 days making rubbing areas a source of infection to other sheep.



Shearing, scanning or other shared equipment, including greasy overalls and moccasins can also spread the mites.



Up to 60% of a flock, which can take several months, can be infected before any clinical signs are seen. This means you cannot tell if sheep you bring in are carrying scab just by looking.



Sheep scab is an allergic reaction by the sheep to the faeces of scab mites as the graze on the surface of the skin.



The life cycle of the mite is 14 days and the population of mites doubles every 6 days

Diagnosis Of Sheep Scab

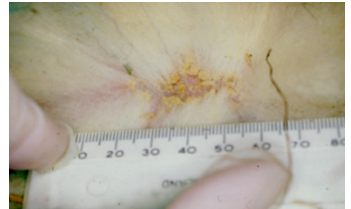
Using medicines such as wormers or injectables simply as insurance or 'just in case' not only leads to problems with resistance but it is also expensive and often doesn't provide the control we need.

Sheep scab is no exception. Itching and wool loss in sheep can be due to a number of things other than scab mites, for example lice or a dermatitis. To make sure that we treat effectively we must have a diagnosis.

There are two ways your Vet can diagnose sheep scab: Skin Scraping & Blood Test

Skin Scrapes

Skin scrapes allow us to collect mites from the skin surface of the sheep. This is the quickest way to obtain a diagnosis when sheep are clinically affected as the mites can easily be collected from the edge of lesions. In the early stages it can be difficult to find mites, even if they are present. This method cannot be used to identify animals which are infected but not yet displaying any clinical signs.



Sheep Scab Blood ELISA test

The sheep scab blood ELISA test allows us to detect antibodies which the sheep produces in response to infestation. These antibodies are only produced following sheep scab infection and can be detected as quickly as two weeks following exposure.



"I had an outbreak of sheep scab this spring after a neighbour's infected sheep got into one of our fields. It wasn't obvious there was a problem until many weeks later when our Vet confirmed scab using a skin scraping. The problem was that by then it had spread to other groups of sheep. We have now added extra fencing to make us secure in future and if by chance we did get rogue sheep in our fields I would definitely use the blood test to check for any infection, not wait for clinical signs."

Charles Sercombe.

"I used the blood test to help decide if my sheep needed treatment before going back to the fell. I have long championed the need for a quick, efficient and accurate method of diagnosis to help reduce unnecessary treatment. As farmers, we only have two options to treat sheep scab, injectable ML (macrocyclic lactones) or OP dips." says Will. "As well as giving the information on whether a treatment is required, the results are also helpful as part of an overall flock health plan. It is impossible to be certain if a sheep has scab without a diagnosis, yet thousands of sheep are treated every year on the basis of 'prevention is better than cure."

Will Rawling.

Treatments For Sheep Scab

There are just two types of treatment available for sheep scab: An organophosphorus (OP) plunge dip or an nedectocide (injectable group 3-ML).

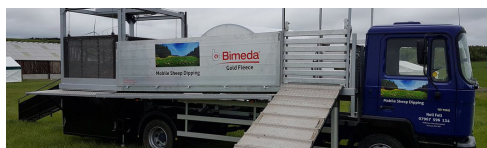


The Table below shows details of the different product types:

Active Ingredient	Method of application	Withdrawal period (Days) after Period	Protection?	Other external parasites?
Diazinon (Gold Fleece)	Plunge dip*	49	Up to 4 weeks	Lice, ticks, blowfly, keds
Diazinon (Paracide)	Plunge dip	70	Up to 4 weeks	Lice, ticks, blowfly, keds
Ivermectin	Injection	42		Nasal bots
Doramectin	Injection (i/M)	70		Nasal bots
Moxidectin (1% and 2%)	Injection	70 / 104	28 days/60 days	Nasal bots

Recently there have been confirmed reports of resistance in scab mites to the injectables so we now need to be very careful how we use these medicines, in particular making sure that scab is present before using them.

* OPs must only be used as a plunge dip. They are not effective if used in a shower or a jetter and must not be used in this way.



'I dipped 103,000 sheep though my set up last year and the numbers are increasing year on year as farmers realise they cannot rely entirely on the injectables and showers do not work effectively.' With more mobile dippers around the country it should now be possible for any farmer to get access to dipping'.

Neil Fell.

Go to the link below to locate your nearest mobile dipping contractor
<https://www.bimeda.co.uk/mobile-dippers>