

Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep



Blowfly Strike in Sheep



Blowflies are the most widespread ectoparasite affecting sheep in the UK, with surveys showing that every year 80% of flocks will have one or more cases of strike. If not properly controlled, this will result in serious welfare problems and reduced profitability in up to 500,000 sheep.



In the UK, blowfly strike is usually caused by the greenbottle fly. The females are attracted by the odour of decomposing matter such as wounds, soiled fleece or dead animals. Each female lays up to 250 eggs which hatch after about 12 hours. After 3 days the mature larvae drop off the sheep and pupate in the soil. Blowfly strikes usually occur in waves. The first fly lays her eggs and the odour from this strike attracts other flies. When the populations of larvae become overcrowded they will attack the living tissue of the sheep. The first signs in affected sheep are a patch of discoloured wool and agitation. Rapid diagnosis and treatment are essential.

Traditionally, we expect to see blowfly strike between May and September but with changing weather patterns, lowland flocks are at risk from March through to December. With increasing flock sizes and the need to rationalise labour use to improve profitability, flocks must have a plan that will provide protection during the risk period and fit with the need to control other parasites.

Blowfly strike can be prevented through the application of an appropriate product before a period of challenge. The table overleaf contains a list of the products currently licensed for this use.

Products Licensed for Prevention and/or Treatment of Blowfly Strike

Chemical	Trade name(s)	Blowfly prevention period	Blowfly treatment	Other ectoparasites covered	Meat withdraw period (days)
Alpha-cypermethrin pour-on	Dysect	8-10 weeks	✓	Lice, ticks and headfly	28
	Zermaset				
Cypermethrin pour-on	Crovect	6-8 weeks	✓	Lice (existing) Ticks and headfly	8
Cyromazine (IGR*)	Vetrazin	10 weeks	X	X	28**
Dicyclanil (IGR*)	Clik	16 weeks	X	X	40
	Clikzin	8 weeks	X	X	7
Deltamethrin	Coopers Spot-on	X	✓	Lice and ticks	35
Organophosphorus (OP) plunge dips	Osmonds Golden Fleece	8-10 weeks <small>This is not an authorised claim. It is based on VLA data and is only a guide.</small>	✓	Scab, Lice, Ticks, keds, headfly	70
	Paracide 62				

* IGR = Insect Growth Regulator. These products do not stop the fly laying her eggs, but the larvae do not fully develop preventing the strike.

** Increased from 3 days for new product in 2011.

REMEMBER, when using these products **ALWAYS** read the manufacturers instructions on dose rate, storage and withdrawal periods. Check application equipment is working properly and is calibrated. Replenish dips according to instructions and follow safety guidelines.

Reducing the Risks

Good management and planning can help to reduce the risk of strike occurring. Most strikes (over 70%) occur around the breech or tail where there is faecal and/or urine soiling as these are very attractive to the flies, with the rest on the body or in the feet.

- Dag to reduce soiling and/or remove dirty wool around the breech
- Reduce the incidence of soiling by avoiding nutritional upsets causing scouring and have a sound worm control strategy
- Tail sheep
- Avoid breeding from sheep that are habitually struck and/or tend to soil themselves due to their conformation
- Dispose of carcasses quickly
- Reduce the incidence of footrot



For more information contact your Vet, adviser or visit:

www.nationalsheep.org.uk

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