



West Sussex-based vet Maarten Boers, from The Livestock Partnership, quells some increasing, and exaggerated, concerns about the incidence of rumen fluke in UK herds and urges producers to only treat cattle if there are clinical signs of the disease.

Parasite is difficult to spot but rare in UK

Migrating menace

Producers have been asking me about rumen fluke recently. There are some drug reps who are advising that stock should be treated now for this parasite. In most instances I would have to disagree, not least because there have been only a handful of cases reported in the whole of the UK, with the last clinical case being seen in November 2012.

Rumen fluke has a similar life-cycle to liver fluke in that it requires a mud snail living in wet conditions to complete its life-cycle. After ingestion, immature stages of the rumen fluke settle in the small intestine. They then make their way from here and end up as mature fluke in the rumen. It is this migratory phase that causes problems and this is when producers may see clinical symptoms, although they are rare and only associated with heavy burdens of fluke.

Symptoms can include watery scour, milk yield reduction, rapid weight loss and bottle jaw. Once the adult fluke have migrated to the rumen, they're fairly harmless and symptoms should ease.

There is currently just one product effective for rumen fluke in this country. This is also a flukicide but only covers mature liver fluke. It should, therefore, only be used for treating liver fluke 12 weeks after housing.

At this time of the year it is essential to treat for immature stages of liver fluke rather than adult stages as it takes 12 weeks from ingestion of the cysts to the development of adult liver fluke. The advice for rumen fluke must be not to treat unless clinical signs are present.

Please speak to your vet to discuss prevention and control of this parasite in your herd.



The encyclopaedia **Rumen fluke**

Causes

Rumen fluke is a parasite with a life-cycle very similar to that of liver fluke. It uses the mud snail as an intermediate host and relies on cattle to then ingest the parasite at its cyst stage, which then settle in the small intestine before migrating to the rumen.

Diagnosis

Diagnosis is difficult as there's currently no test. Post mortem examination can reveal adult fluke in the rumen or immature fluke in the intestine.

Symptoms

The symptoms are rare and only usually

seen when the fluke migrate, in significant number, from the gut to the rumen. They can include profuse diarrhoea, reduced milk yield, weight loss and a swelling under the jaw (bottle jaw).

Treatment

There's only one recommended product available, containing oxcyclozanide, which will treat rumen fluke.

Prevention

Take the same preventative measures as for liver fluke – graze cattle away from wet areas and other mud snail habitats. Avoid buying in stock, if possible, to reduce the risk of introducing the parasite to your unit. Increased cattle movement and wetter weather could see rumen fluke becoming a problem for more herds in the future.

