

# Liver Fluke - What the fluke is going on?

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Adult fluke lay eggs that pass on the faeces to the pasture. With the ideal weather conditions (warm and humid weather), it takes about two weeks for the next stage to develop. The egg hatches and the parasite swims to find a mud snail, where young fluke develop to the following stages in about six weeks. If the weather is muggy, like it has been this summer, more snails will be available for this process to occur. After this occurrence, the parasite emerges from the snail and attaches itself to the surrounding vegetation to then be eaten by grazing animals. When inside a cow/sheep, the parasite migrates to the liver where it causes damage and then starts producing eggs as an adult fluke, 12 weeks after being ingested, and so the life cycle continues.

The period of the year where the animals are at higher risk of having acute fluke starts roughly late September all the way until January. Because we have had such a wet and warm summer, this is even more intensified. There are some control measures you can put in practice, though. It is hard to just get rid of the snails, but there's always the option of trying to fence off wet areas of your grazing pastures or perhaps consider housing the animals a bit earlier. If you are suspicious you have a high risk fluke area, you can also ask the abattoir for some feedback on the state of the livers of the animals you send there. Often in sheep, the only symptom you find is sudden death, in these cases you should investigate the deaths to try and rule out this cause.

In terms of treatment, if you have a high incidence of liver fluke on your pastures, you should be treating yearlings and adult cattle after housing. The products used may vary according to the age of fluke you want to tackle, hence you might need to adjust the time of administration. For dairy cows it's practical to treat them at drying off. Besides, there has been reported resistance to Triclabendazole, so this product should be avoided/used carefully.

## Examples:

Drug name	Example	How long after housing
Nitroxynil	Trodax injection	7 weeks
Closantel	Closamectin pour on	7 weeks
Clorsulon	Ivomec Super injection	8 weeks
Oxyclosanide	Zanil oral drench	10 weeks

Furthermore, don't guess the weight of the animals, under-dosing can cause some of the parasites to survive causing more damage to the liver and increase resistance. Plan for quarantine for all incoming stock, even knowing this might require a lot of work it is always better than bringing resistant fluke onto the farm. Get to know your pastures really well, rely on abattoir feedbacks and talk to your vet/SQP, because together you can come up with a good plan to control liver fluke.

If you would like further information on liver fluke, their prevention or treatment, please call our farm team at Castle Veterinary Group on 01566 772371 and we will be happy to help you.

### **Need further help?**

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.  
Call the practice on **01566 772371** or **visit us online**.