Top Ten Liver Fluke Dos and Don’ts for Autumn

**DO** look out for fluke risk forecasts in the press and online ([www.nadis.org.uk](http://www.nadis.org.uk), [www.scops.org.uk](http://www.scops.org.uk)). Disease risk in autumn is higher following a wet summer and extra treatments may be required particularly for sheep in high risk areas. Always take local knowledge and experience into account when planning liver fluke control.

**DO** think ahead and plan grazing strategies to reduce the risk of infection to certain groups of stock e.g. fattening lambs if you want to reduce the problem of long withdrawals. Sheep are much more likely than cattle to die from liver fluke infection during autumn. Lower risk fields are drier and better drained with no areas where mud snails will thrive. Re-seeds, brassicas or areas un-grazed by sheep earlier in the year will also be lower risk. Housing is another option.

![Picture: Left – Mud Snails, Right – new drainage](image)

**DO** consider collecting samples for monitoring if you are unsure whether animals need to be treated for fluke. First season grazers (both lambs and calves) can be blood sampled to check for antibodies to liver fluke. Dung samples (for coproantigen testing or fluke egg counts) can also be screened but beware of negative results in autumn when only young fluke may be present in the liver. Samples can also be collected to check whether treatment has been effective.

**DO** talk to your vet or advisor about the best product to use and the timing of treatments. This is particularly important if triclabendazole resistance has been confirmed. Products vary in their ability to kill different ages of fluke in the liver making some less suitable for use in autumn. Further information can be found at [www.cattleparasites.org.uk/guidance/COWS_Flukicides_product_table.pdf](http://www.cattleparasites.org.uk/guidance/COWS_Flukicides_product_table.pdf).
DO remember that liver fluke treatments are not long acting. Animals can be re-infected the day after they are treated. If sheep are dying or losing condition then, where possible, move to a lower risk area or house following treatment. Otherwise re-treat in 4 to 6 weeks.

Picture: Liver fluke eggs

DON'T wait until there have been multiple deaths before investigating the cause. If liver fluke is the problem a postmortem examination will provide an immediate diagnosis allowing you to take action and reduce further losses. If another disease is diagnosed you will still get useful feedback on the condition of the liver and whether any fluke are present.

DON'T use combination products (including pour ons) unless treatment for both worms and liver fluke is required.

DON'T give white drenches to sheep at the higher fluke dose during tupping or for one month after the tups are removed. Not only will it fail to kill young fluke it can also cause deformities in the unborn lambs.

DON'T use products containing triclabendazole unless you need to. For sheep in high risk areas this remains the best treatment particularly following a wet summer. In lower risk areas, or following a dry summer, consider changing to products that contain closantel or nitroxynil. If you routinely treat cattle a couple of months after housing there is no need to use triclabendazole.

DON'T worry about rumen fluke. Cases of scour due to infection with young rumen fluke have been reported in the UK but currently these are very rare. In autumn the priority is to target liver fluke effectively. Products that kill rumen fluke only kill adult liver fluke making them unsuitable for use in the autumn.

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