

Hello and welcome to the July Newsletter –

This month I am ‘celebrating’ 30 years since I qualified and went to work at Park Vets, on the 19<sup>th</sup> July 1993 – and I’ll do the maths for you, I’m 53! I had been a student at Park – I still have the original letter from Mr Lonnon written in 1988 – and when Patrick the Irish vet handed in his notice at Christmas before I qualified, Ron Williams picked up the phone and offered me a job – his exact words were “better the devil you know” - to which I agreed! Although I have worked in one place for a long time my job has been quite varied – I did fully mixed for 18 years, then farm and small until 18 months ago. Also, during that time, I taught veterinary radiology and radiography to vet nurses at Pencoed for a few years and did a one day a week locum at the University of Bristol Farm Animal Hospital for a year, teaching the final year vet students, while I was studying for my Cattle Health and Production Certificate. I have been very lucky to work with very good colleagues – I have worked with Sian in the office for the whole time – she was at Park before me. I have no plans to retire, before you ask, as I am still very much enjoying my job.

We have an offer on Toxovax this month – just for July there is 5% off the normal price. As you know, Toxovax is a vaccine that must be used rapidly once delivered, so you cannot buy it in July to use in August/September. However, vaccination can be carried out any time between 4 months and 3 weeks before tugging so vaccinating in July should be well within all of your vaccine window.

For those of you who did not see last month’s Newsletter, for a few different reasons we have decided not to take our usual stand to the Vale Show. Instead we are supporting the Show by sponsoring the livestock rings, and we are donating £1000 to Velindre Cancer Centre in recognition of the excellent care received by some of us and our families. Maybe we will return at a later date but this year I will be there as the Honorary Vet, Rhian will be there showing sheep and Morgan will be attending all day – so we will see you there.

Mary

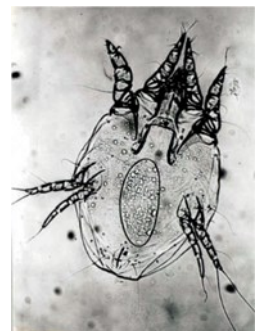
### Sheep scab

Sheep scab is a production limiting, welfare issue that is increasing in prevalence across the UK, to such an extent that industry initiatives such as Gwaredu Scab are being launched to try and eradicate the disease.

Scab is caused by an allergic reaction to *Psoroptes ovis*, a highly infectious mite about the size of a pinhead. It is important to correctly diagnose scab as the pour-on treatments commonly used to treat lice will not treat scab, wasting time and money plus allowing infection to spread further through the flock.

### Transmission

The mites most commonly spread directly sheep to sheep, however the scab mite can survive off the sheep for up to 17 days. Due to the intense itching sheep will scratch themselves on any surface they can leaving behind tags of wool, and the mites, which allows them to spread to any other sheep coming into contact with these surfaces. As well as fences and hedges this can also mean equipment and machinery such as handling systems and shearing machines can transmit the infection indirectly.



Cont. PTO

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## Symptoms

Infection causes intense itching, meaning sheep scratch, rub their shoulders and flanks, stamp their feet and bite at their flanks initially seen as loose wool tags progressing to wool loss. Left untreated wool loss becomes significant, the skin will become inflamed with either oozing or crusting on the surface. Eventually disease will progress to anorexia resulting in weight loss, low milk production and therefore poor lamb growth rate and ultimately sheep can have seizures and die.

Symptoms can take 20-100 days to become apparent meaning that a large percentage of the flock can be infected before the disease is noticed. This is because there is a delay between infection and large numbers of mites causing the allergic response.



## Diagnosis

As mentioned previously an accurate diagnosis is important, this can either be by scraping samples of the skin from lesions and looking for the mites under a microscope (a quick method) or by blood sample if mites cannot be identified, however this can take 2 weeks.

## Treatment

There are 2 licensed treatment options for scab:

- Organophosphate (OP) plunge dip – Must be plunge dip as jettors or sprays do not work, the practice has contact details for mobile dippers if needed.
- Injectable clear wormers (Macrocyclic lactones) – We have seen a lot of cases where the scab mites have been resistant to these products meaning treatment failure, extra cost and more advanced disease/production losses. Also as these products are wormers their use can contribute to wormer resistance development. Do not use 1% moxidectin injection with Footvax treated sheep as adverse reactions (occasionally lethal) have been seen.

## Prevention

Keep boundaries secure, ideally double fenced to prevent contact with neighbouring flocks across the hedge or fence. Quarantine all incoming stock strictly, preventing any contact with the existing flock, for a minimum of 3 weeks or get incoming animals blood sampled to check they are clear. Ensure any shared equipment including transport vehicles, handling systems or shearing equipment is thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before entering your farm.

## Legislation & cost

While scab is no longer a notifiable disease, it is a legal requirement to treat sheep with confirmed scab, this means that local authorities can force treatment if sheep have a confirmed diagnosis.

The cost of sheep scab to a farmer with 300 ewes ranges from £1000-£2400 per outbreak, this can vary depending on speed of diagnosis and treatment, with prompt effective treatment reducing the financial impact.

## Gwaredu Scab

This is a newly launched Welsh project aimed at sheep scab eradication. Participation is on a voluntary basis but means that farmers who suspect that scab may be present in their flock can get free diagnosis by a vet and free treatment by approved mobile dipping contractors. Plunge dipping by the mobile contractors will be the only funded treatment offered and only confirmed cases will be eligible.



**Gwaredu Scab**



If you suspect scab and wish to be part of the project contact 01554 748 576 or email [gwareduscab@colegsirgar.ac.uk](mailto:gwareduscab@colegsirgar.ac.uk). Once a farm has reported its case, a Gwaredu Scab technical officer will visit to coordinate the testing process and, if required, approach surrounding farms to minimise the potential spread of the disease.

If you would like to discuss sheep scab or itchy sheep please give the practice a ring on 01443 223751 and we will be happy to help. Similarly if you would like further information on Gwaredu Scab please don't hesitate to ask.

This month's author "Mini" Morgan Donagh

## Office opening hours

Monday – Friday (Except Bank Holidays)  
8.30am - 5.30pm

## Emergency out of hours service

Weeknights 5.30pm - 8.30am  
Saturday & Sunday all day