

Dear Colleagues,

### **December Liver Fluke Update**

We last sent out our liver fluke forecast and thoughts in November so thought it a good time to update things now given that we are approaching or in a handling window for ewes just now in mid pregnancy.

We still haven't seen any evidence of recently acquired liver fluke infection in sheep coming through the postmortem rooms at Dumfries, Aberdeen, St Boswells or Glasgow.

The results of this autumn's serum *Fasciola hepatica* antibody ELISA testing are shown in the table below with a relatively low number of positives. The antibody ELISA can detect infection from around 4 weeks into the lifecycle.

	<b>No. of Submissions</b>	<b>No. of Samples</b>	<b>Number of positive results</b>
September	20	151	2 positive from 1 submission
October	37	210	5 positive from 4 submissions
November	21	101	1 positive (purchased lamb)
December (to date)	10	51	1 positive lamb from 1 submission

Coproantigen results for the same period are summarised below. Coproantigen can pick up fluke infection from around 8 weeks into the lifecycle.

This test is often used to investigate ill thrift in addition to being used as a monitoring tool.

Positive results in adult sheep may represent chronic fluke infection. Again, a relatively low number of positives.

	<b>No. of submissions</b>	<b>No. of submissions containing positive samples</b>
September	18	4
October	29	7
November	23	4
December (to date)	12	1

Again, it is worth stressing that while general information is useful, local decision making based on farm and field specific factors is essential. Cases of acute fluke have recently been reported from Northern Ireland and the North of England, with Ireland also reporting enteritis due to acute rumen fluke. It would be sensible to remain alert for outbreaks of acute/sub-acute fasciolosis into the first month or two of 2024. If you are diagnosing acute fasciolosis on farm please let us know.

Migration of immature fluke and probable secondary *Clostridium novyi* (black disease) infection was detected on histopathology of a section of lamb's liver submitted from a holding in Fife during November, reaffirming the importance of clostridial vaccination in preventing sheep losses.

All types of liver fluke testing are now eligible for the Scottish Government's Preparing for Sustainable Farming funding under the liver fluke investigation option for both cattle and sheep. Guidance is available at [Preparing for Sustainable Farming full guidance \(ruralpayments.org\)](https://ruralpayments.org/)

Author: SRUC Veterinary Services Aberdeen.