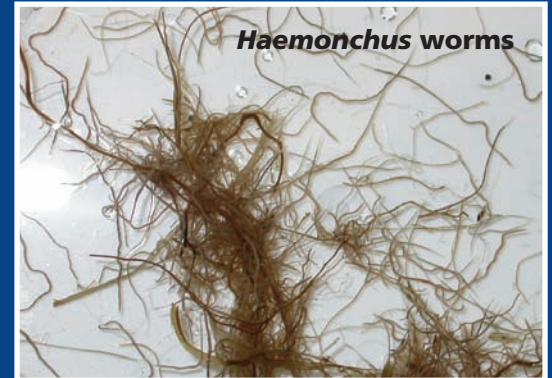


# Haemonchosis



**Haemonchosis is a disease caused by *Haemonchus contortus*, a blood-sucking parasite found in the stomach (abomasum) of goats and sheep.**

It is a very important cause of disease in the tropics and sub-tropical areas of the world, but it is also found in colder climates and has recently been found as far north as the Arctic circle! It has been diagnosed in Great Britain and if climate change results in warmer weather then we could diagnose it more often. It was also one of the first parasites to show anthelmintic (wormer) resistance and this has led to severe problems in farming sheep and goats.

The animal (sheep or goat) eats infective larvae from the pasture in the same way as they do other gut parasites. However, when *H. contortus* develops to an adult stage in the stomach it feeds by sucking blood from the stomach lining. It also produces large numbers of eggs which are excreted in the faeces of an infected animal, which leads to highly contaminated pastures.

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**Please contact your nearest VLA regional laboratory for advice on tests and services available. Contact details can be found on the VLA website.**

#### Contact details

VLA, Weybridge,  
New Haw, Addlestone,  
Surrey, KT15 3NB  
United Kingdom

**Tel:** 01932 341111  
**Fax:** 01932 347046  
**E mail:** [enquiries@vla.defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@vla.defra.gsi.gov.uk)  
**Web:** [www.vla.gov.uk](http://www.vla.gov.uk)

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## ● Diagnosis

*H. contortus* eggs cannot be differentiated from other gut parasite eggs in the faeces so further tests (hatching the eggs and identifying the larvae) or post mortem examination is necessary to diagnose this disease.

The parasite is large enough to be seen with the naked eye in the abomasum. It is about 2-3 centimetres long. In fresh specimens, the female worms have a 'barber-pole' appearance as the white ovaries wind around their blood filled gut.

## ● Treatment

Adult sheep and goats do not develop immunity to this parasite, so when it is identified on a farm, they have to be treated as well as the lambs/kids.

There are two additional drugs that can be used to treat *H. contortus* as well as the more commonly used broad-spectrum wormers. These are closantel and nitroxynil.

Contact your veterinary practitioner for further advice.