



Wormer resistance in sheep



There are three different types of wormers available against gastro-intestinal parasites in sheep.

These are:

- Benzimidazoles (albendazole, fenbendazole, oxfendazole and mebendazole).
- Levamisole/morantel.
- Macrocyclic lactones (ivermectin, doramectin and moxidectin).

Resistance to all three types of wormers has been recorded in the UK. In a recent survey in Wales, 82% of farms that took part had benzimidazole or levamisole resistance or both.

Wormer resistance does not suddenly appear on a farm, but the wormer gradually becomes less effective.

Continued

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

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It would be wise to check, once a year, that the wormer you are using is working well in your lambs. There are two tests for this.

● **The faecal egg count reduction test**

Ten lambs are selected, weighed and marked. Faecal samples (a minimum of 10-15 pellets) are obtained and then the animals are treated for their weight with the wormer (checking that the dosing equipment is accurate). Faecal worm egg counts from these sheep are compared with those obtained from the same animals taken a set time after treatment. The time between samples depends on the type of wormer used. Sufficient numbers of worm eggs have to be present at the start of this test, for it to be accurate. Resistance is suspected when the reduction in average egg counts is less than 90%.

- ◆ For benzimidazoles, faecal samples should be taken 10-14 days after treatment.
- ◆ For levamisole, faecal samples should be taken 5-6 days after treatment.
- ◆ For macrocyclic lactones, faecal samples should be taken 14-16 days after treatment.
- ◆ Doramectin or moxidectin, (the longer acting MLs) should not be used in this test.

● **Larval development test**

VLA offers this test. It uses pooled faecal samples from a number of lambs. If sufficient worm eggs are present then these are tested for benzimidazole and levamisole resistance. Macrocyclic lactone resistance cannot be tested by this method at present.

Contact your veterinary practitioner for further advice.