

AUTUMN FLUKE FOCUS: PREVENTION, DETECTION, PROTECTION

Liver fluke is an important parasite in the UK. This is estimated to cost UK agriculture somewhere in the region of £300 million per year due to production losses and is now considered to be endemic in certain areas of the UK, especially in the wetter regions, such as Wales and north-west England. However, what effect does the recent warm dry summer weather have and how likely are you to see liver fluke disease?

Understanding Liver Fluke Disease

Liver fluke disease is caused by the trematode parasite, *Fasciola hepatica*. The same species affects both sheep and cattle. Disease is caused by the migration of large numbers of immature flukes burrowing through the liver tissues and/or from the adult flukes sucking blood and causing inflammation in the bile ducts of the liver.

The liver fluke life cycle involves two different hosts: cattle or sheep, or any other vertebrae including humans, and the mud snail *Galba truncatula*. Both hosts need to be present to complete the cycle. The snail host is mainly found in muddy, wet areas of ground with poor drainage; hence the prevalence of fluke is greater in livestock grazing such areas.

What Impact Has The Weather Had?

Last winter felt incredibly wet and indeed there were reports of acute liver fluke disease caused by immature liver fluke in March, which is very unusual. Despite this in April 2025, most regions of the UK recorded below average rainfall and higher than average temperatures and that theme has continued into the summer with the Met office reporting that summer 2025 is officially the warmest summer on record for the UK. The rainfall although a bit more variable was also below average for much of the UK.

What does this mean for the liver fluke and its snail host?

Where the ground has been dry, the snail will probably become inactive and stop secreting cercariae that then go on and infect our livestock. However, later when the ground becomes wet the snail will become active again meaning the infective liver fluke stages will appear later than expected.

It has been noted on occasions that one of the worst years in previous times for liver fluke is after a very dry summer. How can that be? For example, in a field that has a mix of drier better drained slopes and permanent wetter boggy areas, over a dry summer the grass may stop growing in the dry areas but continue in the wetter parts.

In the wetter areas the snails may continue to be active and fresh fluke infection may continue to be passed onto the grass. This therefore means the stock are concentrated to graze in the area where the liver fluke continues. This all means that predicting the risk of liver fluke for any given group of cattle or sheep is now very difficult. Diagnostic testing is now more important than ever before to determine the need and timing of any treatment.

Diagnosis and Treatment

There are several drugs available to kill liver fluke within livestock, but these are effective at different stages of the fluke development.

Therefore managing liver fluke on farm is increasingly complex. Do you need to treat? When is the correct time to treat? What product should I use? These are all questions to consider with your team at Cheshire Farm Vets. We have a number of products that we stock and are able to recommend depending on stock type, age, what you are trying to achieve. Speak to us today if you are concerned, or visit the online shop.

References

1. AHDB. Available at <https://ahdb.org.uk/liver-fluke>.
2. SCOPS and COWS urge sheep and cattle producers to remain vigilant as the liver fluke risks extends into Spring 2025. Press release, 03/04/2025. Available at <https://www.scops.org.uk/news/29409/scops-and-cows-urge-sheep-and-cattle-producers-to-remain-vigilant-as-the-liver-fluke-risks-extends-into-spring-2025/>
3. April 2025 Monthly Weather Report. Available at https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/binaries/content/assets/metoffice.govuk/pdf/weather/learn-about/uk-past-events/summaries/mwr_2025_04_for_print.pdf.
4. Summer 2025 is the warmest on record for the UK. Available at <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/news-and-media/media-centre/weather-and-climate-news/2025/summer-2025-is-the-warmest-on-record-for-the-uk>.

LIVER FLUKE LATERAL FLOW TEST – A NEW ERA IN ON-FARM DIAGNOSTICS

Developed by the University of Liverpool, this pen-side test detects antibodies in a small amount of blood—delivering results in just 10 minutes for both Cattle and Sheep

KEY BENEFITS

- Fast: Results in 10 minutes—no lab required.
- Convenient: Portable and easy to use on-farm.
- Early Detection: Identifies infection from as early as 2 – 4 weeks post-exposure.
- Targeted Treatment: Enables informed decisions, reducing unnecessary drug use and resistance risk.

When to Use It: Autumn Sentinel Testing of first season grazed lambs or calves. Early Detection in sheep during grazing season, for beef cattle at housing and suspected cases. Speak to the team today to book your stock in for a test or collect a test today.



**AVAILABLE
NOW**



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CLEARING THE AIR: TACKLING IBR IN YOUR HERD

Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis (IBR) is a highly contagious viral disease in cattle caused by Bovine herpesvirus 1 (BHV-1 and BHV-2), leading to respiratory issues and significant economic losses in the cattle industry.

IBR is primarily characterized by inflammation of the upper respiratory tract. It can affect cattle of all ages and is transmitted through inhalation, often spreading rapidly within herds. The disease is endemic in many regions, including the UK, where approximately 40% of cattle have been exposed to the virus at some point in their lives. As we look ahead to the Winter and cattle are housed, now is the time to be aware of the symptoms, as it can affect the reproductive tract and can cause abortion. Speak to the team at Severn Edge Farm about the best options for your herd.

During primary infection, cattle shed virus in high titres in nasal and ocular fluids for approximately 14 days, which can infect in-contact animals. After replication in the lining of the nose, the virus is transported along nerves and becomes latent in nerve tissue close to where the virus enters, where it remains during the lifetime of the animal.

Stress can lead to the reactivation of BHV-1 and BHV-2, which is then transported back along the nerves to the primary infection site. Shedding of reactivated BHV-1 is not always accompanied by clinical signs of the disease. Each animal once infected with BHV-1 is a lifelong potential shedder of the virus and poses a risk for its BHV-1 free herd mates.

DIRECT TRANSMISSION OCCURS THROUGH CONTACT WITH:

- Acutely infected animals
- Latently infected animals where reactivation of the virus occurs

INDIRECT TRANSMISSION MAY OCCUR THROUGH:

- Contaminated semen
- Embryo transfer
- Humans
- Contaminated materials
- Airborne transmission

**AVAILABLE
NOW**



SYMPTOMS:

The clinical signs of IBR can vary in severity and may include:

- **Respiratory Issues:** Coughing, nasal discharge, and conjunctivitis.
- **Fever:** Affected cattle may develop high fevers (up to 42°C).
- **Reduced Appetite:** Infected animals often lose their appetite and may show signs of depression.
- **Milk Yield Drop:** In adult cows, IBR can lead to a significant drop in milk production and fertility issues.
- **In severe cases,** IBR can lead to pneumonia and even death, particularly if secondary bacterial infections occur.

DATES FOR THE DIARY

CATTLE BOLUS EVENT

11th November 2025 from 6pm

All are welcome to join us for an evening with AGRIMIN to learn about bolusing your cattle. After the great success of the recent sheep meeting we have organised a replica for Cattle.

LOCATION: Severn Lodge Farm, Button Bridge Lane, Kinlet, Bewdley, SY12 3ED

SPONSORSHIP

We are proud to be supporting and attending the **LUDLOW FARMERS BALL** (15th November)

AND

The **WINTER PRIMESTOCK SHOW & SALE** at Bridgnorth Livestock Market (25th November)

You're Invited

As a thank you from Severn Edge Farm Vets for your support and custom over the last year we would love for you and your families and farm teams to come and join us

CHRISTMAS DRINKS

at

THE BOYNE ARMS

11th DECEMBER 2025, 7pm



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