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Innovation in parasite management boosts animal health and performance

Introducing the latest on-farm technology to manage parasites could lead to gains of up to £12 per lamb, while also reducing reliance on wormers, according to a study presented at NSA Sheep 2018.

The Sainsbury's and Techion collaborative R&D project proves that more targeted use of wormers not only improves animal performance by increasing lamb growth rates, but also reduces farm costs and supports sustainable worming practices.

Sainsbury's agricultural manager for lamb, John Brocklehurst, explains the adoption of new technology is critical in delivering a productive and sustainable lamb supply chain.

“We've invested in research and development that matters most to our farmers and more accurate control of worm burdens is an area where clear gains can be achieved. The use of innovative technology offers increased lamb output and improved animal health and welfare alongside cost savings and is a win win for producers and consumers alike.

“Technology that also offers a positive food story on wormer use reduction - akin to the work the industry has done in reducing antibiotic use - is what our customers want to hear,” he says.

“It makes sense that regular FEC testing and an informed approach to treating stock will support a more effective worming programme and reduce ineffective wormer usage.

“That's exactly what the R&D project revealed.”

Assessing the effectiveness of FECPAK^{G2}, the latest in image based faecal egg count (FEC) technology, the results highlighted undetected wormer resistance in sheep could be costing Sainsbury's lamb producers over £10 million per year.



84% of farmers involved were revealed as using ineffective wormers, resulting in estimated losses of £12 per lamb. If reflected across the flock, this equates to £12,000 per year for the average Sainsbury's lamb producer.

Dr Fiona Lovatt, independent sheep specialist, was involved in the project, and says regular FEC testing has a key role in delivering an effective worming programme.

“Farmers involved in the project used FECPAK^{G2} to conduct regular FEC testing. It showed accurate treatment of the right animals with the right wormer, at right time significantly improved daily liveweight gains (DLWG), while reducing wormer use by up to 50%,” she explains.

Commenting on the FECPAK^{G2} technology, Eurion Thomas, European operations manager at Techion UK notes its ease of use and quick results.

“The diagnostics platform of FECPAK^{G2} means FEC testing can be carried out virtually anywhere by anyone, including on-farm by the farmer,” he explains.

“Image based, it provides greater quality control and auditability, producing rapid results. This is encouraging more frequent testing and better decision making at farm level, both in terms of immediate worming decisions and long-term flock health planning.

“Findings from the project demonstrate how accurate testing and diagnosis can increase farmer profitability, by maximising animal performance while reducing treatments. This delivers benefits at both farm and supply chain level,” concludes Mr Thomas.

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Notes to editors:

Key findings from the project:

- Wormer resistance was greater than anticipated - 84% of UK farmers using ineffective wormers
- Undetected Wormer resistance costs Sainsbury's suppliers >£10 million p.a.
- Wormer resistance costs individual Sainsbury's farmers up to £12K p.a.

Use of FECPAK^{G2} showed:



- It is possible to reduce drench use by 30-50% without compromising animal performance
- Appropriate drench timing can improve sheep performance and health, while saving money
- FECPAK^{G2} is a valuable on farm tool, with financial and animal wellbeing and performance benefits