

# The benefits of the Parasite Control TASAH programme

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**A**nthelmintic resistance has become a major concern for the long-term sustainability of intensive livestock farming and has been shown to be widespread in Ireland. Resistance is considered present on a farm when anthelmintics (wormers) no longer work effectively at killing the target parasite. This effect may not initially be noticed on the farm but will become more evident over time. The resistance is present in the worms on the farm, which are in the animals and on the pastures, so both wormer treatments and pasture management need to be considered for control. Anthelmintic resistance is a complex problem and as management practices and risk factors vary markedly between farms, there is value in tailored veterinary advice.

The Parasite Control TASAH is a Rural Development Programme-funded programme initiated by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and managed by Animal Health Ireland, which funds a free veterinary consult to discuss parasite control and faecal testing for gut worms. Over 580 veterinarians nationwide are trained and currently participating in the Parasite Control TASAH programme, making it convenient for farmers to sign up as they are usually able to use their local veterinary practice. As part of the farm visit, veterinary practitioners are asked to review parasite control and make three recommendations to their clients to improve parasite control. Two faecal samples for worm egg counts are also done which can be used for monitoring or drench testing. The programme is open to all Irish cattle and sheep farmers, and those who took part last year are eligible again in 2023.



This is the second year of the programme and in 2022 over 16,000 consults took place as part of the Parasite Control TASA. The most problematic parasites reported by cattle farmers were lungworm, gut worms and liver fluke. For sheep farmers, it was stomach and gut worms, flystrike and liver fluke.

Veterinarians are well placed to help identify a resistance problem on the farm or the factors that might be increasing the risk of this developing. They can further advise where incorrect products are being used for targeted parasites, inform about which parasites might be problematic on the farm, optimising dosing and handling, advising on treatments and drug choice, monitoring, testing, and quarantine protocols.

Many of the faecal egg tests from last year showed low egg counts for worms, especially early in the grazing season. These can provide useful information on whether treatments are necessary in animals being monitored along with average daily gains. Alternatively, they can give an indication of whether the treatments are effective when used in the form of a drench test. Your veterinarian can help optimise the timing of these tests and interpreting them, which is not always straightforward.

One risk of buying in animals is bringing in resistant worms and other infectious diseases onto the farm. The majority of Irish farms have animals moving onto the farm but less than half of those who took part in the programme last year had any form of quarantine or treatment plan for these animals. To lessen the risk of buying in resistant worms, animals should be treated and housed before being released onto pastures that have been recently grazed by the home stock. This is so that any potentially resistant worms will be diluted by the worm larvae already present on the pastures.

The risk of worm resistance increases with the frequency of treatments, so these should be used only when necessary, particularly when low levels of worms are expected, such as during dry summers or on 'clean' pastures such as reseeded fields. The parasite treatments should be adapted to the environmental conditions and considering the risk of animals developing clinical disease or production losses. Pasture management has an important role to play in minimising the burden of parasite eggs and larvae on the grass.

Many of the currently advised best practices for parasite control have already been embraced by Irish farmers by the time of the consult which is encouraging. However, there is also room for further progress due to improved understanding of the mechanisms of drug resistance. It is hoped that this programme will encourage farmers to consider making changes that will improve sustainability over the long term.

Farmers can register for the Parasite Control TASA [click here](#). Previously registered farmers should follow up with their veterinary practitioner to book their consult and make sure to get ahead of the programme closing deadline of 31st October 2023.

**ah** Animal Health Ireland

**ANIMAL HEALTH IRELAND**

**PARASITE CONTROL TASA CONSULT**

The Parasite Control Targeted Advisory Service on Animal Health (TASA) is now in its second year. All sheep and cattle farmers in Ireland are eligible for one consult per year as part of the programme. This service is part of the Rural Development Plan 2014-2020, co-funded by the Irish government and the EU. The purpose of the Parasite Control TASA is to facilitate discussions and planning between farmers and their veterinary practitioners on the best practices around parasite control and trying to minimise the further development of anthelmintic resistance. Resistance is a growing concern and is considered present when wormers no longer kill the target parasites and have become less effective. Parasite resistance and control is a complex problem and requires planning tailored to specific farms. A 'one size fits all' approach is not effective for parasite control. For this reason, AH encourages a parasite control plan that considers parasite factors, weather, testing, grazing and farm management for an individual farm.

The Parasite Control TASA can assist farmers by funding a veterinary farm visit and two faecal egg counts and is open to all cattle and sheep farms in Ireland. More information on the programme and how to register is available on the AH website.

**Register at**  
 AnimalHealthIreland.ie  
 or through your local  
 veterinary practitioner  
 or scan the QR code below.

AnimalHealthIreland.ie

www.AnimalHealthIreland.ie