

SPARC

Sustainable PARAsite Control in Grazing Ruminants

SPARC- a new HORIZON EUROPE thematic network to promote sustainable worm control in grazing ruminants

Ruminant farming is critically important in maintaining the viability of rural communities and ensuring food security.

All grazing ruminants are exposed to parasitic worm (helminth) infections, that negatively impact ruminant health/welfare and productivity. Infection with parasitic worms is estimated to cost the livestock sector upwards of €1.8 billion a year in Europe, with 80% of this due to production losses and 20% due to treatment costs. Efficient worm control is a requirement to guarantee the health, welfare and production efficiency of grazing ruminants. Moreover, evidence shows that controlling worm infections in ruminants can significantly reduce the emissions of greenhouse gasses.

Worm control is largely based on preventive use of anthelmintic drugs, but excessive use of these has led to anthelmintic resistance, which has become a global threat to effective parasite control.

The only way to mitigate anthelmintic resistance in ruminants is to adopt sustainable worm control strategies. SPARC (Sustainable Parasite Control in Grazing Ruminants) aims to build a European Community of Practice involving all interested stakeholders to develop and promote best practices for sustainable worm control.

The ultimate goal is to increase the performance and the resilience of ruminant livestock farms by widely disseminating best practices, tools and solutions on sustainable worm control that improve (1) animal health and welfare on the farms; (2) economic performance, and (3) the environmental sustainability of the sector.

Launched in February 2024, SPARC is a three-year collaboration between researchers, veterinarians, advisory services, farmers and industry to identify needs, practices, barriers and drivers for adoption of existing or newly developed practices for sustainable worm control in different production systems and regions and demonstrate them on pilot farms across the EU and UK.

National and international stakeholder networks will share sustainable worm control practices among farmers, across borders and production systems (beef and dairy cattle, meat and milk sheep and goats). Dissemination of experiences and results will be facilitated by a Knowledge Exchange Platform on the SPARC website, hosting testimonies, case studies, videos, practice abstracts and decision support tools, available in local languages. SPARC activities and results will be communicated on social media and in professional journals.

Europe wide collaboration

SPARC is a cooperation between 15 partners in 10 countries coordinated by Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (ILVO) and Kreavet in Belgium. The partners involved are Ghent University (BE), Università Degli Studi di Napoli Federico II (IT), Hellenic Agricultural Organisation (ELGO)-DIMITRA (GR), Zuidelijke Land- en Tuinbouw Organisatie (NL), Institut de l'Elevage (FR), Animal Health Ireland (IE), Bioresearch Laboratories (GR), Agencia Estatal Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas (ES), Toinen Pro Art Fundacja (PL), Centre Interregional d'information et de Recherche en Production Ovinele Mourier (FR), Boehringer Ingelheim (DE), The Queen's University of Belfast (UK) and Moredun Research Institute (UK).

Further information:

www.wormsparc.com

Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn: wormsparc EU

Email: info@wormsparc.com

Technical coordinator: Johannes Charlier

Ireland contact:

Natascha Meunier (Animal Health Ireland)

pc@animalhealthireland.ie

Irish network signup: <https://portal.animalhealthireland.ie/SPARC/>