

NADIS Health Bulletin



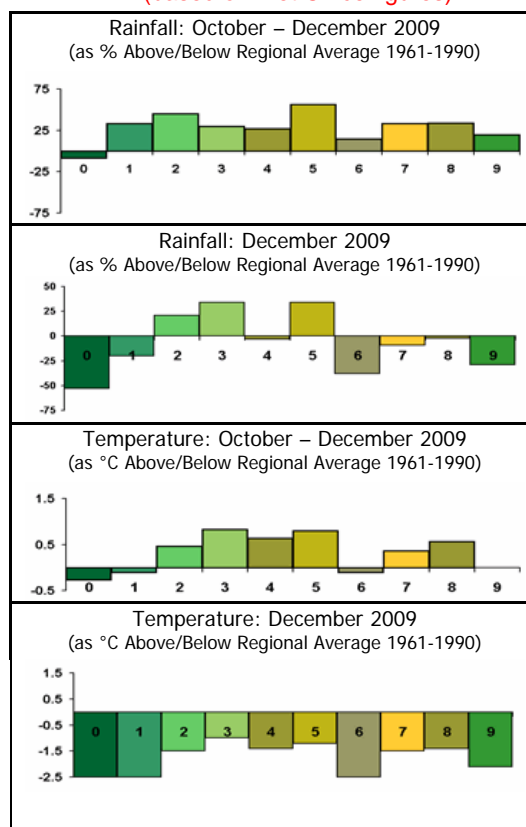
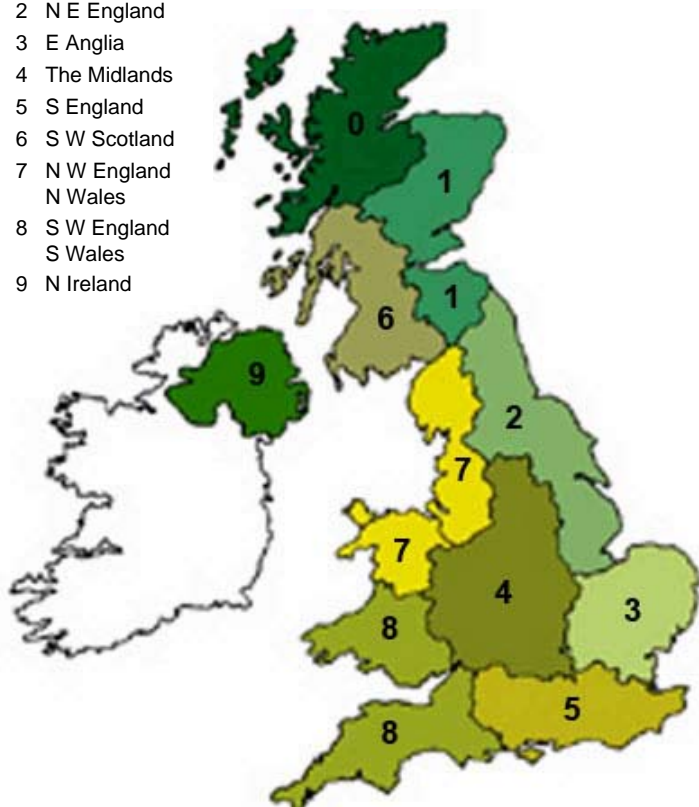
Knowledge transfer to farmers

REGIONS

- 0 N W Scotland
- 1 E Scotland
- 2 N E England
- 3 E Anglia
- 4 The Midlands
- 5 S England
- 6 S W Scotland
- 7 N W England
N Wales
- 8 S W England
S Wales
- 9 N Ireland

February 2010

Regional Weather (based on Met Office figures)



December 2008

Mean temperatures in December ranged from around 1 °C below the 1961-1990 average in south-eastern England to more than 3.5 °C below in some parts of northern Scotland. The early part of the month was mild, but it then became cold, leading to the coldest December across the UK since 1995. Mean temperatures over the October to December period were slightly below the long-term average in Scottish regions, although slightly above in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Heavy snow caused widespread disruption during the latter part of the month. Rainfall in December was 20 to 30 per cent above the 1961-1990 average in eastern England, but around 30 to 50 per cent below average in

northern and western Scotland, and Northern Ireland. The three-month rainfall figures remain above average across the UK, apart from in Northern Scotland.

January continued to be cold across the UK, with the temperature in all regions several degrees below average, and widespread snowfall. The period from mid-December to mid-January has seen the severest winter weather for decades. The second half of the month is expected to be unsettled, with some rain. Temperatures should be around average or just below, with some overnight frosts.

Any late January gales and snow often cease during early **February** and the second week usually sees high pressure and cold temperatures. Northerly conditions with low pressure and snow are often seen during the last week of February. below average.

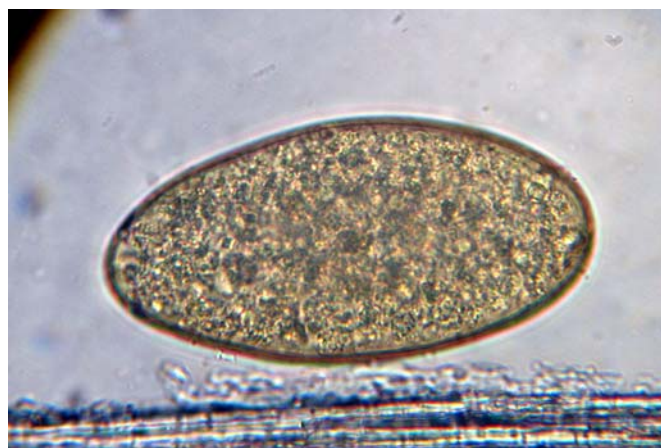
February Parasite Update and Forecast

FLUKE

Numbers of infective metacercariae decline through the winter, and by February any stock that have been excluded from high risk pastures for the autumn and winter are often allowed access again. Some infectivity may still survive, however, although this is a greater risk in mild and wet years, as the metacercariae are most susceptible to desiccation and prolonged freezing. This year, many pastures will have been heavily contaminated during the summer and into the autumn, although the prolonged freeze may well have seen a sharp decline in infectivity over the winter.

Many sheep will have picked up infection over the late summer, autumn and winter following last year's wet summer. Numbers of acute and sub-acute fluke cases have therefore been high this season, and in addition many infected animals will suffer from chronic fluke, causing ill thrift and poor production, if not effectively treated. Chronic cases are seen in every month of the year but usually peak in the late winter/spring.

Sheep on farms with a history of fluke will probably have been dosed with a flukicide effective against immature fluke in January. If history suggests continuing exposure to risky pasture, then this year a follow-up treatment four to six weeks later may be a good idea. If animals have not been treated, then faecal samples from around 10 ewes should identify any surviving infection acquired during the peak of pasture infectivity in the autumn and indicate the need to treat



***Fasciola hepatica* eggs are large (130-150µm long), operculate and yellow brown. Their presence in sheep faeces indicates the presence of live adult fluke in the animal within the last 3 weeks. This can be important in the diagnosis of chronic fascioliasis along with history, clinical signs, post mortem examination and/or biochemical evidence of chronic liver damage (e.g. raised serum GGT levels, hypoalbuminaemia).**

the group. Undosed cattle, or cattle dosed in October then re-exposed to infective pastures, could now be treated or checked for the presence of fluke eggs in faeces. Serology can indicate previous exposure but does not indicate current status.

SHEEP NEMATODES

Parasitic Gastroenteritis

Although PGE is often diagnosed in every month of the year, infectivity is relatively low when temperatures are below 5 °C and larval movement and metabolism are minimal. These inactive larvae actually survive the winter well, and if it does continue to be cold this winter then they may contribute heavily to the infective pasture larval population in the spring.

Milder spells may lead to a continuing risk of PGE in store lambs and hogs through the winter, particularly on paddocks heavily contaminated earlier in the season; for example, by an outbreak of clinical PGE. This can continue into February given suitable conditions. The need to dose outwintered store or replacement lambs during the winter can be assessed using mean or pooled faecal egg counts. Adult sheep may also develop PGE during the winter, often concurrently with diseases such as fascioliasis or Johne's disease, nutritional stress and/or late pregnancy.

Contaminated pastures can only be considered "safe" after the majority of larvae have died. Rising spring temperatures cause the larvae to become more active and, if they are not ingested by a potential host, they use up their energy reserves and die. This often begins to occur around April, with pastures classed as low-risk

from late June if no sheep have grazed them in the spring, or medium risk if grazed in the spring by adult non-lactating sheep.

A veterinary parasite control plan for the forthcoming grazing season should be formulated on an individual farm basis including identifying any safe grazing available at turnout in spring (e.g. last year's cattle pastures) or in midsummer (e.g. aftermath for weaned lambs). Following the guidelines in the Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep (SCOPS) manual should reduce selection for anthelmintic resistance.

Nematodirus

Autumn and winter *Nematodirus* infection has been identified again in 2009, particularly in Scotland and northern England. It has previously been associated with wet conditions. In most areas, the major impact of nematodiosis remains as an acute disease of young lambs in spring/early summer. Forecasts for this will be produced when the March 2010 meteorological data are available. December 2009 temperatures were lower than average, and if temperatures continue to be below average, a cold February/March could slow down parasite development and delay the appearance of infective larvae on the pasture until there are large numbers of susceptible grazing lambs, leading to a high-risk year for nematodiosis.

Coccidiosis

Coccidiosis may appear in February, in intensively reared January-born lambs, particularly in heavily stocked sheds. Lambs show scour, dullness and abdominal pain. The early lambs tend to pick up infection passed by the ewes and increase the

environmental contamination, often without becoming ill. Disease is then more common when later lambs are exposed to this increased level of infection (March-June).

To try a quiz based on this article and have it immediately electronically marked, click [QUIZ](#)

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NADIS Parasite Forecasts are produced by leading parasitologists based on parasite profiling, detailed monthly Met Office weather data and reports from NADIS sentinel practices. The comments are general; veterinary advice should be taken for individual farm circumstances as part of a veterinary health plan.

NADIS Health Bulletins are designed to improve farm income, animal health and welfare by promoting disease control and prevention.

Discuss how health planning can improve the profitability of your farm with your veterinary surgeon.

NADIS is supported by BPEX, EBLEX, HCC, QMS, Merial Animal Health and Pfizer Animal Health.



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