

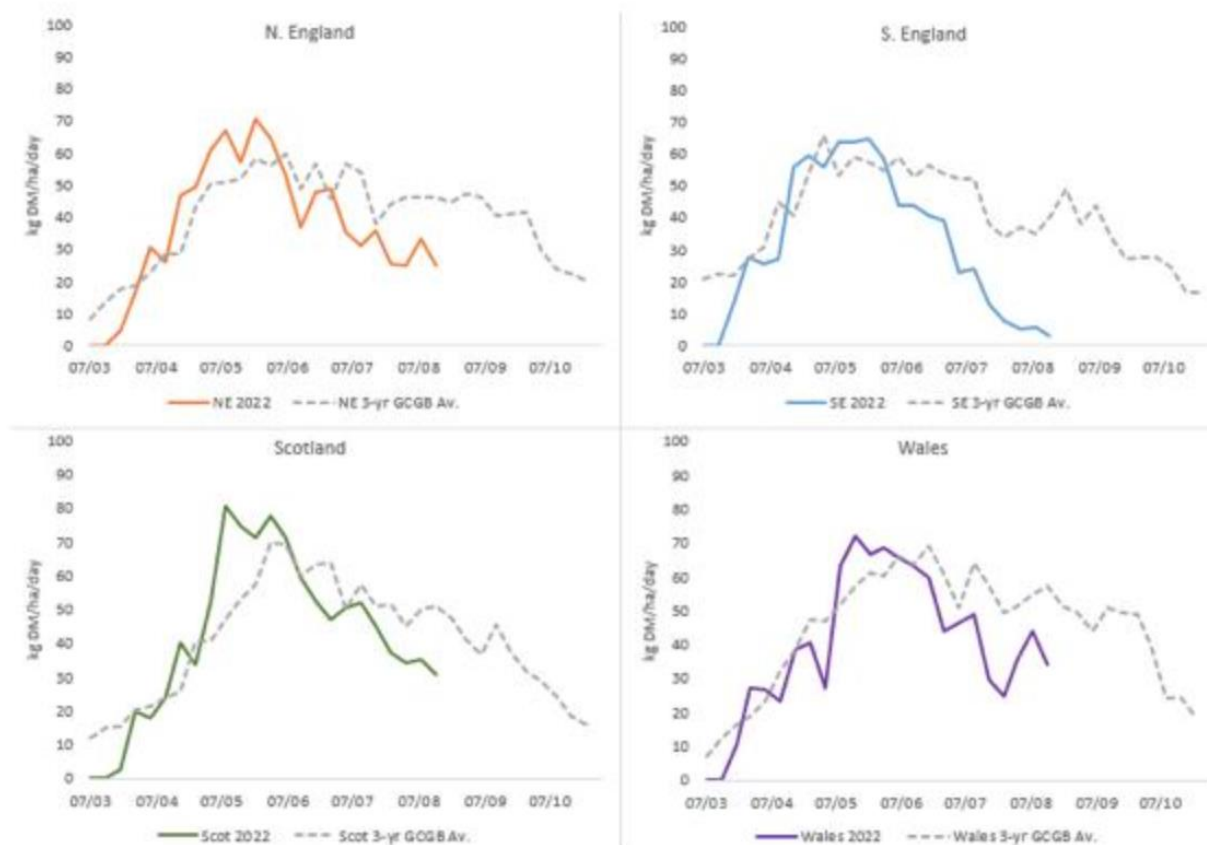


## November 2022

### Sheep Parasitic Gastroenteritis – Worms!

Adding to record-breaking temperatures this summer, official Met Office data confirms the period between January and June at the start of this year has been the driest in England since 1976. The South of England has been hit hardest, with summer grass growth rates having been significantly lower than the 3-year average for the region. So - this has been a hard year on lambs! Many of our farms are experiencing higher than usual numbers of 'tail-end' lambs, that may still not have made it to slaughter weight. The lack of nutrition in the grass alongside high peaks in worm egg numbers on pasture has created the perfect storm in some instances.

Grass growth throughout the UK this year vs a 3-year average (grey dashed line) from Grass Check UK:



Source <https://www.grasscheckgb.co.uk/news/169-managing-grassland-systems-in-extreme-conditions> . We have recorded some of the highest worm egg counts in recent years- regularly up into several thousand eggs per gram. Many farms have benefitted from using late season Group 4 or 5 worming drench on affected stock, and to ensure minimal resistant worms are carried over on the pasture to next season.

As a rule, most farms harbour worms which are resistant to white, yellow, and sometimes clear wormers (classes 1-3). Testing your lamb's dung pre and 14-days post drenching if using white or clear, seven days post drench for yellow can give you an idea of levels of resistance on your farm, by seeing what percentage reduction the wormer gives. Mapping out resistance can help you plan for next year's lamb crop and avoid creating 'super worms' – they will stick around no matter what you throw at them!

## Duchy College Apprenticeship Teaching

Castle vets is providing some training for the new Duchy College Apprenticeship scheme. The first session was held last month on gastrointestinal anatomy, function and diseases and was a real success! Students got to dissect a rumen and examine a calf's upper GI tract in the post-mortem room, with support from vet Lucy. There was a real sense of enthusiasm and commitment to learning which did the students proud, and we look forward to future sessions with them!

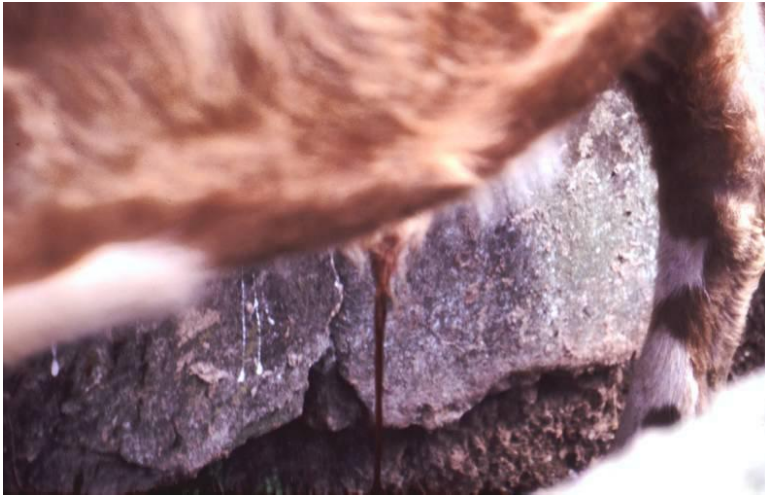


## Redwater – an increase in cases seen

*Babesia* is a tiny parasite that lives inside some ticks traditionally seen in certain geographic areas. If an infected tick feeds on a host e.g a cow, it can infect the host causing damage to the host's red blood cells. As the *Babesia* parasites replicate inside the red blood cells, they burst open the fragile membrane that coats them and destroys the red blood cell. This results in all the hemoglobin leaking out which is excreted via the kidneys – causing red urine hence the name "Red Water". This also means the animal's ability to transport oxygen around the body is massively



reduced, causing cattle to be quiet, unable to walk long distances and have pale mucous membranes (gums and inner eye lids). Traditionally, it was associated with adult cattle newly grazing scrubby, 'ticky' land and Moorland. However, this year we have seen a sharp increase in cases, several on farms which have never come across the problem before.



If noticed and treated quickly, the parasite is easy to kill, with little resistance recognized against the treatment via an injection called Imizol. However, as signs can be subtle, cases sometimes are only noticed once the parasite has infected a large proportion of the animal's red blood cells. We can take a blood sample from the affected animal and examine the red blood cells in the laboratory at the practice for the

presence of the parasite, additionally we can send a free sample to Starcross for definitive diagnosis under their surveillance scheme. The treatment Imizol has a very long meat and milk withdrawal, which is why diagnosis through clinical signs and often blood testing is crucial, especially if you haven't seen the disease on your farm before.

All ages of stock can be affected, however younger animals that are infected before the age of around 6 months tend to be able to develop solid immunity without becoming sick unlike older cattle. So, grazing young cattle on tick-heavy pasture is the best way to help develop early immunity and minimize cases in adult animals – however unfortunately this obviously takes several years to protect your whole herd. In the meantime, watching stock closely and acting quickly to help to catch and treat cases before they progress to severe anemia is crucial. If you are buying older stock into an area known to have red water please speak to one of our vets to discuss preventative treatments.

