

## Sheep Scab – Advice on treatment and management



### The Disease

Sheep scab is notifiable to the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) under the Sheep Scab (Scotland) Order 2010. The disease seriously affects the welfare of sheep and has a significant financial impact through its effects on the condition of ewes, the growth rate of lambs, damage to wool and reduced quality of sheepskins. Scab mites feeding on the skin surface cause intense irritation to the sheep that results in them rubbing and scratching. The disease is more common in the winter and spring when the sheep have full fleeces. Whenever possible flock owners should co-ordinate any treatment or control measures with their neighbours to gain maximum benefit from their time and effort.

#### **When assessing Scab status in the flock, you should consider:**

- Is there evidence of scab?
- Were ALL introduced sheep treated for scab and held in quarantine for three weeks?
- Are boundaries secure and sheep proof? Sheep scab can spread directly across a fence from sheep to sheep and from tags of wool left on fences.
- Are neighbouring flocks infected or at risk of infection?

### Sampling Guidance

When sampling for ectoparasites it is recommended to collect three to five skin scrape and/or hair/wool pluck samples from the edge of active lesions. Skin scrape samples should be collected onto a glass slide using a small amount of liquid paraffin. DO NOT send scalpel blades. Hair or wool pluck samples should include the hair bulb. A small amount of carefully collected material has greater diagnostic value than large quantities of randomly selected hair or fleece!

### Sheep Scab Control

Sheep scab is the most contagious disease of sheep in Britain today. Mites will survive off the sheep for up to 17 days. Transmission is usually sheep to sheep however transporters, fence posts used for rubbing, bushes, trees and contaminated clothes & equipment can all be a source of infection.

Sheep moved onto the farm are a particular risk for introducing scab mites. This includes bought-in sheep (including rams), sheep returned from market or summer grazing, sheep returning from away-wintering and stragglers. Remember that sheep going to away-wintering and sheep moving on for wintering could also be infected.

Consider the following points when advising on a management plan for sheep that arrive on a farm:

- Assume all sheep arriving on your farm could be infected with sheep scab.
- Check fences and gates before sheep are unloaded.
- Dip with a scab approved dip or inject with one of the injectables.
- Do not mix with the main flock until two weeks after full treatment has been completed.
- Other sheep should not come into contact with areas (such as pens) used by the quarantined sheep for 17 days.

Remember it is not just sheep moved onto the farm which can be carrying sheep scab mites. Any container used to transport sheep (e.g., trailers, wagons) and any equipment used by contractors and shearers presents a risk for the spread of scab unless they are fully cleaned and disinfected prior to use.

#### **In the event of an outbreak**

- In Scotland notify the local APHA Field Service office if sheep scab is suspected or diagnosed (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/animal-and-plant-health-agency/about/access-and-opening#scotland-field-service-offices>)
- Confirm the diagnosis by sending samples to SRUC Vet Services / APHA since other skin parasites can mimic scab. A blood test is available, which can confirm infection from two weeks after exposure.
- Advise that owners of neighbouring flocks should be informed
- Alert the suspected source of infection.
- Treat all sheep in the flock.
- Strictly adhere to the product requirements for treatment.
- If using short-acting injections, move sheep to a clean area after treatment and avoid contact with untreated, uninfected sheep for 7-14 days depending upon product used. (An example of a clean area would be a field ungrazed by sheep for at least 17 days.)

## **SCAB TREATMENT AND CONTROL**

### **Dips with long lasting protection**

Group	Active Ingredient	Trade Name	Marketed By	Meat Withdrwal Period
Organophosphate	Diazinon	Paracide 62*	Animal Ltd	70
		Osmonds Gold Fleece**	Bimeda	49

These products kill mites & provide up to four weeks protection from a single dipping. Dipping will also help control blowfly, ticks, lice and keds. (Allow 14+ days between dipping and dosing with any drench containing levamisole.)

\*Paracide 62 is dispensed through a pump provided by the supplier.

\*\*Osmonds Gold Fleece is dispensed using a special dispensing kit with a hand pump.

### Injections for prevention & treatment of scab

Group	Active Ingredient	Trade Name	Marketed by	Meat withdrawal period (days)
Milbemycin 3-ML	Moxidectin 1%	Cydectin 1% Zermex 1%	Zoetis Downland	70
	Moxidectin 2%	Cydectin 20ml/ml Zermex 2% LA		104
<p>Cydectin/Zermex (moxidectin) 1% - Two subcutaneous injections 10 days apart are required for treatment. A single subcutaneous injection provides protection against re-infection for 28 days. Treated, infected sheep must not be mixed with untreated, uninfected sheep for 14 days.</p> <p>Cydectin/Zermex (moxidectin) 2% LA – A single injection only is required for treatment and has 60 days persistence for prevention of reinfection.</p>				

### Injections for treatment & control of scab

Group	Active Ingredient	Trade Name	Marketed by	Meat withdrawal period (days)	
Avermectin 3-ML	Doramectin	Dectomax Soln. for Injection	Elanco	70	
	Ivermectin	Noromectin & Paramectin	Norbrook	Eco Animal Health	42 days after 2nd injection
		Qualimec	Ecomectin		42 days after 2nd injection
		Ivomec Classic Injection			Merial
		Panomec	37 days after 2nd injection		
		Bimectin	Bimeda	42 days after 2nd injection	
		Premadex 1%	Downland	42 days after 2nd injection	
		Molemec	Mole Valley	37 days after 2nd injection	
		<p>One intramuscular injection of Dectomax (doramectin) is required. Treated, infected sheep must not be mixed with untreated, uninfected sheep for 14 days.</p> <p>Two subcutaneous injections of an ivermectin, seven days apart are required. Then only mix with untreated, uninfected sheep after a further seven days</p>			

**This document is intended for guidance only. Always check the datasheet before using any veterinary medical product.**