

The occurrence of internal parasites in sheep meat in Wales

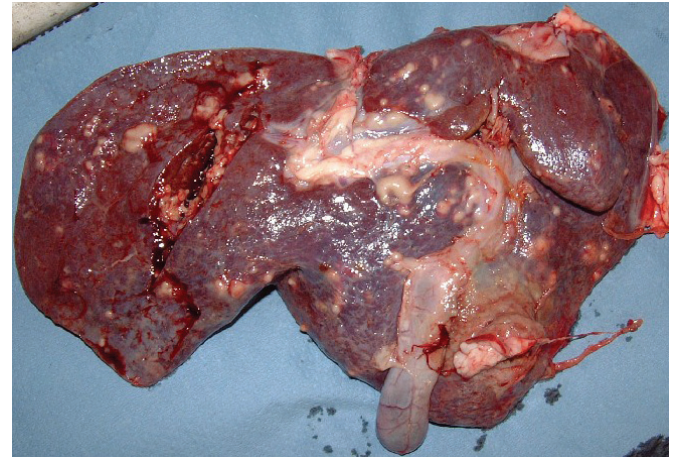


Introduction

Losses from carcass and offal condemnations in slaughterhouses and cutting plants as a result of parasitic infestation of sheep meat and offal needs to be addressed. These losses have an affect throughout the industry leading to:

- poorer livestock performance
- financial losses from product sales
- increased disposal costs for infected tissues

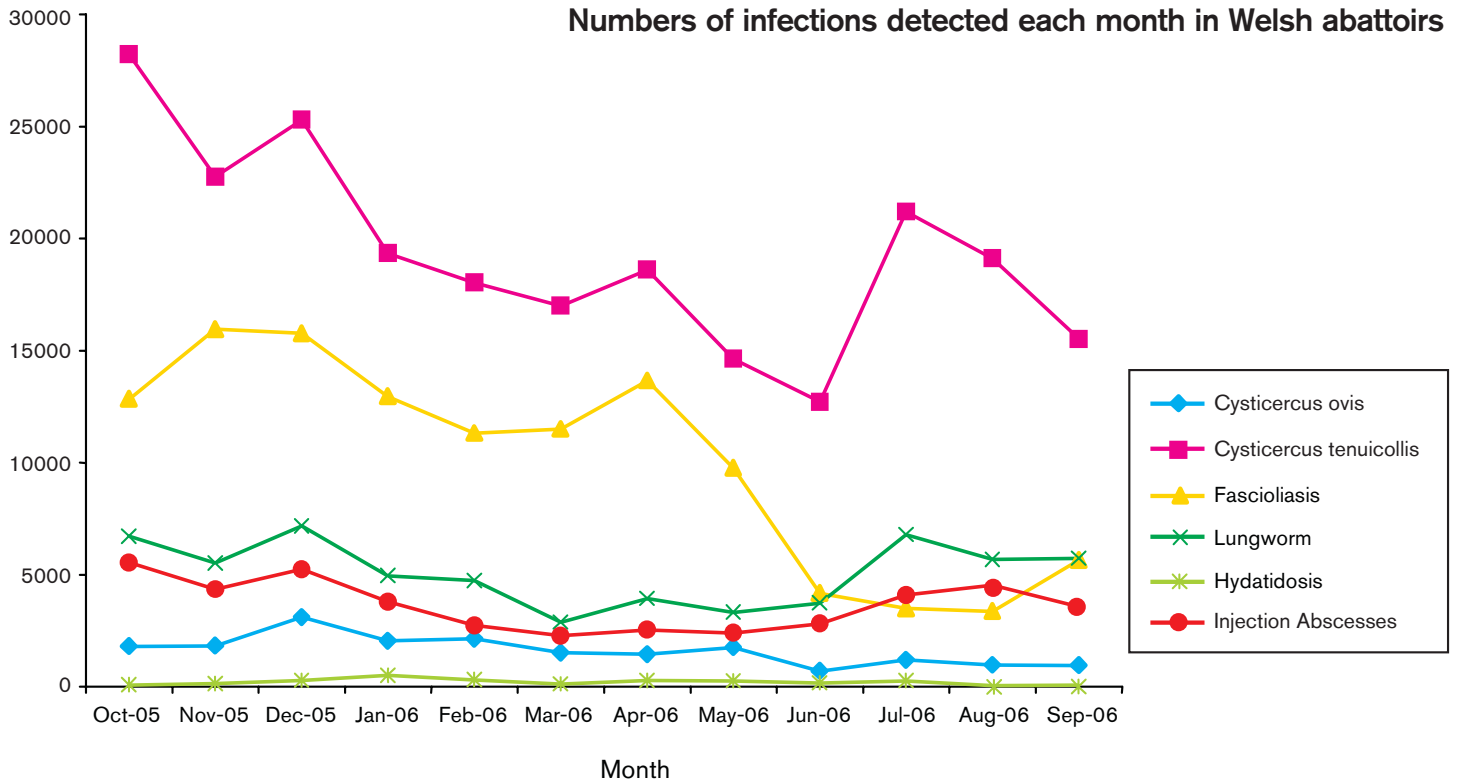
At present, the infections detected are rarely traced back to source but this will soon become a legal requirement. All sheep producers should be aware of the problems and how they can be avoided.



Condemned liver infected with Liver Fluke

Parasites of main concern

<p>Liver Fluke (<i>Fasciola hepatica</i>)</p>	<p>Cause: Parasitic flatworms that infest the livers of cattle and sheep. Can cause severe illness or even death. The intermediate host is the mud snail. Control: Use of suitable anthelmintics, controlling snails or reducing access to snail infected areas.</p>
<p>Hydatid Cysts (<i>Echinococcus granulosus</i>)</p>	<p>Cause: This is the larval stage of a tapeworm primarily found in dogs. Larvae are contained in fluid-filled bladders (1-10cm diameter) commonly in the liver or lungs (and occasionally in bone, brain, heart, spleen, kidney and orbit). Control: Ensure the safe disposal of carcasses plus routine treatment of dogs with an effective wormer.</p>
<p>Lungworm (<i>Dictyocaulus filaria</i>)</p>	<p>Cause: Adult worms live in the bronchi of the lung and can cause secondary infections such as pneumonia. Sheep of all ages are susceptible but lambs of 4-6 months are often most severely affected. Control: A combination of clean grazing and appropriate anthelmintic treatment.</p>
<p>Sheep Bladderworm (<i>Cysticercus ovis</i>)</p> <p>Disease also known as sheep measles</p>	<p>Cause: This is the larval stage of the tapeworm <i>Taenia ovis</i>, that is found in the intestines of dogs and wild carnivores. Depending on the degree of infestation, carcasses may be fully or partially condemned. Control: Break the sheep - dog lifecycle by not allowing dogs access to infected tissue and ensuring effective worming. Dispose of carcasses correctly and worm your dogs.</p>
<p>Thin-necked Bladderworm (<i>Cysticercus tenuicollis</i>)</p>	<p>Cause: The cystic stage of the tapeworm <i>Taenia hydatigena</i> that is found in dogs, cats and foxes. Cysts (1-60mm diameter) are found on the liver, diaphragm and peritoneum of sheep and goats. Control: Correct disposal of infected carcasses and routine treatment of dogs with an effective wormer.</p>



This data was collected during the 2005/2006 season at the four main sheep abattoirs in Wales.

For a total kill of 3,298,165 lambs, there were:

- 232,415 (7.0%) cases of Thin-necked Bladderworm
- 120,442 (3.6%) cases of Liver Fluke
- 61,161 (1.8%) cases of Lungworm
- 19,461 (0.6%) cases of Sheep Bladderworm
- 2,534 (0.08%) cases of Hydatid Cysts
- In addition, 43,886 (1.3%) of lambs killed were trimmed or condemned because of abscesses caused by injection with contaminated needles.

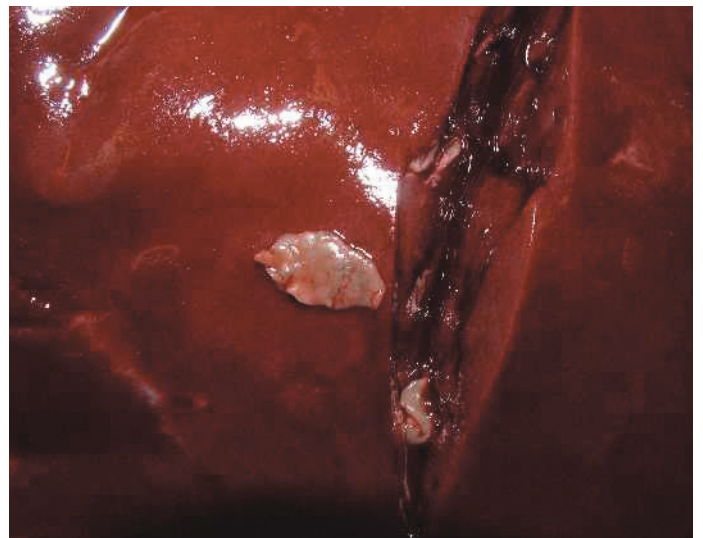
Abscesses may be an increasing problem if the use of injectibles rises following the ban on Cypermethrin sheep dip and increased awareness of worm resistance to drenches. If only 100g of tissue were removed per incidence, over 4 tonnes of lamb would have been lost.

All infected material is unsuitable for the human food chain which increases disposal costs.

What can you do?

Discuss the implications of these diseases for your farm with your vet and address their control in your Farm Health Plan. Improve your aseptic injection techniques to reduce unnecessary losses.

Effective control will result in improvement to animal health, welfare and farm economics as well as reduced wastage.



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