

28.11.22

NI farmers are currently being offered a free testing and treatment service for suspected cases of Sheep Scab on farm. Sheep Scab is estimated to cost the sheep industry in GB at least £78 million per year¹, with the cost of the disease in a 300-ewe flock estimated to be approximately £1,000 - £2,400 per outbreak for a lowland flock and £1,000-£2,100 per outbreak for an upland flock.

Sheep Scab is a highly contagious disease which can lead to reduced animal performance and poor animal welfare. To date there has been little research undertaken on Sheep Scab within NI.

Symptoms

Itching, scratching, biting at flanks, restlessness, loss of wool, skin excoriation, skin crusting, wool staining, pain and loss of condition are common signs of a potential outbreak of Sheep Scab in your flock.

Sheep Scab mites can survive off-host for 17 days, therefore Scab is challenging to deal with as infested animals seek relief from irritation by scratching on fence posts, bushes, farm fixtures and equipment leaving mites behind which can then be transferred to other sheep. Vehicles and trailers used to transport sheep are also a potential source of infestation and should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after use.

The Project

Funded by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, the ground-breaking project commenced in September 2022 to address Scab and provide important information as the industry develops future strategies to control this disease.

The project is open to 100 flocks across Northern Ireland on a first-come first-served basis. To date, over thirty farmers across the province have already benefitted from the project and treatment is underway or has been completed in those flocks where Scab has been confirmed.

What does the Project entail?

Your flock will be provided with advice to investigate if Sheep Scab is present and, where necessary, provide support to assist with treatment. Your nominated vet will be funded to undertake a farm visit and investigate if Sheep Scab is likely to be present in your flock by looking for clinical signs, taking blood samples and possibly skin scrapes. If your vet recommends that treatment is required, the project will fund the supply of prescribed medicines up to a reasonable limit. (The costs of application of dip or treatment with injectables will be borne by the flock owner).

Who can join the Project?

If you have been experiencing any clinical signs or have concerns about Sheep Scab in your flock, you are eligible to participate in the scheme.

Where a farmer wants to check that their flock's Sheep Scab treatment has been effective, they can apply for a post-treatment blood check test, in particular for cases treated by injectables.

If you would like to find out more information regarding the scheme, please phone AHWNI on 07517 599497/ 028 7963 9333 or email jenny.martin@animalhealthni.com/
info@animalhealthni.com

¹ Nixon et al The high cost of sheep scab Vet Rec 17/24/Oct 2020



NI Sheep Say:



SOS
STAMP OUT SCAB