

Press Release

Innovative parasite control in ruminants

Website for the PARASOL-Project: www.parasol-project.org

Since February 2006 twelve academic institutions and five business ventures from seven EU-countries as well as Africa have been researching the development of sustainable, low-input methods for internal parasite control in ruminants. The international research project PARASOL (Parasite Solutions) has been funded for a period of three years by the European Union Framework 6 Program. The project is coordinated by Professor Jozef Vercruysse of the University of Gent.

In September 2007 a meeting of all the PARASOL participants took place in Naples for the purpose of presenting and reviewing the research findings to date. The aim of the PARASOL-Project is to reduce the amount of anthelmintics used for the control of gastro-intestinal worms in ruminants by means of developing new treatment methods that are following the principles of Target Selective Treatments (TSTs). Using this approach it may be possible to limit the development of anthelmintic resistance, which is an issue for livestock producers throughout the world.

This approach is very different to current whole herd treatment strategies and relies upon being able to identify those animals which will most benefit from treatment. Researchers in participating countries with very different production systems and parasite problems have examined a range of parasitological and production parameters that can be used to direct TSTs. The research to date has led to the development of some improved diagnostic techniques that can be used in conjunction with parasitological and/or performance data to selectively target anthelmintic treatments.

Professor Vercruysse, the project co-ordinator, has described the various ways in which the PARASOL project has already begun to disseminate its research findings to the livestock industry.

Further information about the project, its progress and developments, together with details of all the project-partners and lists of publications are available on the PARASOL-Website.

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Notes for the editor:

- 1. European Framework 6 Program (FP6):** The Framework Program (FP) is the European Union's main instrument for funding research in Europe. Six Framework Programs (FPs) have been implemented since 1984, each covering a period of five years with the last year of one FP and the first year of the following FP overlapping. The current sixth FP (FP6) aims to contribute to the creation of a true "European Research Area" (ERA). ERA is a vision for the future of research in Europe, an internal market for science and technology. It fosters scientific excellence, competitiveness and innovation through the promotion of better co-operation and coordination between relevant actors at all levels. The biggest part of FP budget will be spent on focussing and integrating future research activities on seven thematic priority areas such as Food Quality and Safety.
- 2. Gent University, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Laboratory of Parasitology, Merelbeke, Belgium**

The Laboratory of Parasitology of the Gent University, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, employs a total of about 22 veterinarians, biotechnologists and laboratory technicians with expertise ranging from parasite epidemiology and immunology to helminth molecular biology. The research group has extensive experience with the epidemiology and control of gastrointestinal nematode infections in cattle and small ruminants in Belgium and the tropics and strong expertise in a broad range of biochemical and molecular techniques including anthelmintic resistance. Laboratory techniques such as ELISA, (Real-Time) PCR, polymorphism and proteomic techniques, recombinant protein production and chromatography are applied routinely.