

Press release

New strategies for worm control in ruminants

– „Treat as few as possible and as many as required!“

That was the message emerging from the final meeting of the PARASOL (Parasite solutions) project, which was held in Edinburgh recently. The findings from the three year EU-funded project were presented to the numerous invited guests including policy makers and representatives from industry and agriculture.

The development of anthelmintic resistance by gastro-intestinal nematodes of ruminants to the commonly used anthelmintics is a major problem which threatens the sustainability of livestock production in many countries worldwide.

The aim of the PARASOL project was to identify novel, sustainable approaches to the control of these parasites and to exploit the principles of Targeted Treatment (TT)) where the entire flock/group is treated based on diagnostic information and Targeted Selective Treatment (TST) where only those individuals which will benefit in some way are treated.

These approaches are very different to current whole herd treatment strategies and through the use of these methods it may be possible to limit the development of anthelmintic resistance as well as provide sustainable worm control for optimal performance and animal health.

On the basis of their research, the PARASOL-team made specific recommendations for changes in the way the drugs are used. They demonstrated that the TT and TST approaches are effective, practicable, reduce selection for resistance and are economically competitive.

Several practical methods were presented to identify those animals in need of treatment. These methods measure the infection or production status of the animal or herd to reveal those that are underperforming because of worm infections and need treating. Recommendations from the project were that, TT or TST approaches should be promoted to allow effective and sustainable worm control and slow the development of anthelmintic resistance, and anthelmintic efficacy should be monitored regularly.

Introducing these new approaches to worm control will require the active co-operation of veterinarians, agricultural advisory services, farmers and the animal health industry.

Current results, specific recommendations and background information concerning the PARASOL-project can be seen on the PARASOL-website (www.parasol-project.org) and are ready for download.

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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.