

Liver Fluke

Posted on [August 31, 2010](#) by [Graham](#)

Liver Fluke is a problem we see most commonly in cattle and sheep along the foothills of the Tararuas following a dry autumn. I have not seen Liver Fluke in alpacas, but they can be infected.

As you are probably aware, liver fluke has an intermediate host which is a type of water snail, frequenting swampy areas and waterways. After a dry period, cattle and sheep will graze further into these areas increasing the chances of them ingesting infective immature fluke. These immature fluke migrate from the gut, through the liver causing significant damage and end up in the gall bladder, where the adult forms produce eggs.

Clinically, if sheep and cattle ingest a large number of immature fluke, the damage to the liver can cause acute ill thrift and death. More commonly we see a more chronic form during the following winter with **weight lose and bottle jaw**, (fluid swelling under the jaw).

Most drenches are not effective against larval stages of fluke, although some will act against adults but recovery can be slow as the liver damage has already occurred.

It is best to confirm that Fluke is a problem on your property as specific fluke drenches are more expensive. This is done with a simple blood test. We can then advise you on the best course of action to control Liver Fluke.