

Barbers Pole (Haemonchosis)

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Haemonchus contortus, more commonly known as Barbers Pole, is the **most common blood sucking parasite** in sheep and alpacas, and is the first worm to thrive (and explode in numbers) with warm autumn rain. They inhabit the abomasum (4th stomach) and burrow into the stomach lining.

Even relatively small numbers can rapidly cause severe anaemia and even death. Unlike other parasites the number of eggs in the faeces do not necessarily correlate well to the numbers of worms in the animal, so faecal egg counts are not always as useful for this parasite as for others. As there is little or no scouring it is often not recognised as a worm problem.

Affected sheep or alpacas show **symptoms** of anaemia. They become lethargic, may be staggery and spend a lot of time just sitting. Close examination will show their gums and mucous membranes (eye conjunctiva) to be very pale.

Lambs and cria (4 -5 month) are most at risk, followed by rising two-tooths.

Most of our quality drenches will cover *Haemonchus* although some have a longer duration of effectiveness than others. As numbers of *Haemonchus* can reach critical levels within a couple of weeks of warm autumn rain, it is the timing of drenching that is important in **preventing** problems.