

To dose or not to dose

KIERAN DEVANEY

Recently, a client asked for a dose with a short meat withdrawal for bulls near finishing.

I asked the farmer why he was considering dosing them. He had decided to go with belt and braces and cover them just in cases following a dose they received at housing. On further questioning, he said they had been "thriving" and dungs were all normal. I suggested that they may not need a dose and we might do some faecal egg samples in the practice to check worm counts.

It is not unusual to have conversations like this, with

many farmers now carrying out worming by routine and calendar dates. We went on to discuss the farm's fluke risk. We discussed that, in the practice, there was very low levels or prevalence this year. This information can all feed into better decision-making around parasite control.

Anthelmintic resistance is a problem. It's defined as the ability of a worm to survive a dose, which, given correctly, should have killed it. If we are going to survive and thrive, farmers and vets must work together to overcome this threat to profitable farming. Resistance to some products

is becoming more common in our practice annually.

How can farmers cope with this? Firstly, there is no blueprint. A protocol particular to your farm should be developed with your vet. The first and most important change is to routinely take dung samples before and after dosing. Before to see if it is necessary and after to make sure it is working.

When margins are so tight on farm, unnecessary or ineffective dosing just adds to costs. Why risk reducing future production and performance?

Speak to your vet now and make a plan for 2019. Discuss faecal egg counts, your farm's

history, the products routinely used and what you could use this year.

Discuss your dosing technique, procedure and target weights. Discuss grazing management and on farm biosecurity. Ask your vet about refugia. Resistance is not going away, it's here to stay.

Kieran Devaney BVM&S works at Ormonde Veterinary, 14 Barrack St, Kilkenny. Ormonde Veterinary is part of XLVets, a group of practices working to achieve a better future for agriculture and veterinary in Ireland. See www.xlvets.ie.