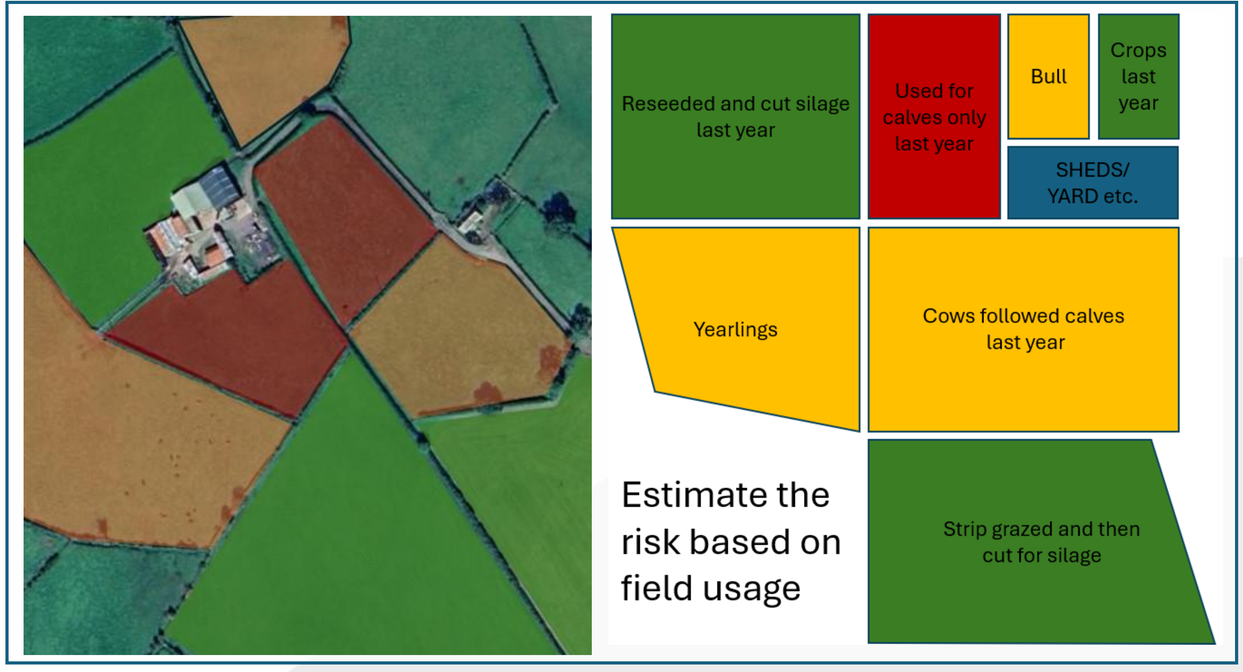
PRACTICE ABSTRACT: 5

Sustainable PARasite Control in Grazing Ruminants

Traffic light grazing management – Did you know that the majority of parasites on your farm are not in your animals?

When treating animals, you are only targeting the parasites that are causing performance loss at that moment in time, but there are many parasites out on pasture waiting to be picked up by a host to mature and multiply.

Reducing exposure of naïve livestock to parasites can help reduce disease and the need for intervention, saving money, improving performance and prolonging the effectiveness of the wormer remedies.



Traffic light grazing involves mapping pastures on your farm in terms of risk. This is a self-assessed map that can be done using a white board, a mental note or there are even some non-specific software apps that lend themselves to this approach.

Younger, first season grazing animals are fairly naïve and they suffer the effects of parasites more easily, also shedding a larger number of eggs in their dung. This leaves more pasture contamination behind them as they graze. In the start of the season, turning these younger animals out to low risk, green pasture is the preferred option. As these animals graze, the pasture should be marked amber and the young stock should not return to these pastures in the first half of the season. Back fencing and moving regularly with portable equipment lend to further reduced risk and better animal performance.

Using a combination of good stockmanship, laboratory results, penside tests, performance monitoring and veterinary advice, we can draw a conclusion on the level of contamination being placed on the pasture by the stock and make a call on how this will affect the risk for the next grazing in rotation. If we conclude that we have a high volume of eggs being deposited out on pasture, we mark the pasture as being red.

As animals are excellent at building their own immunity to many parasites, they need to gain some exposure. If weather conditions are good, animals are not under stress and appear to be hitting their expected performance, then we can try introducing them to amber pastures.

Consider these actions to reduce the risk to a lower level:

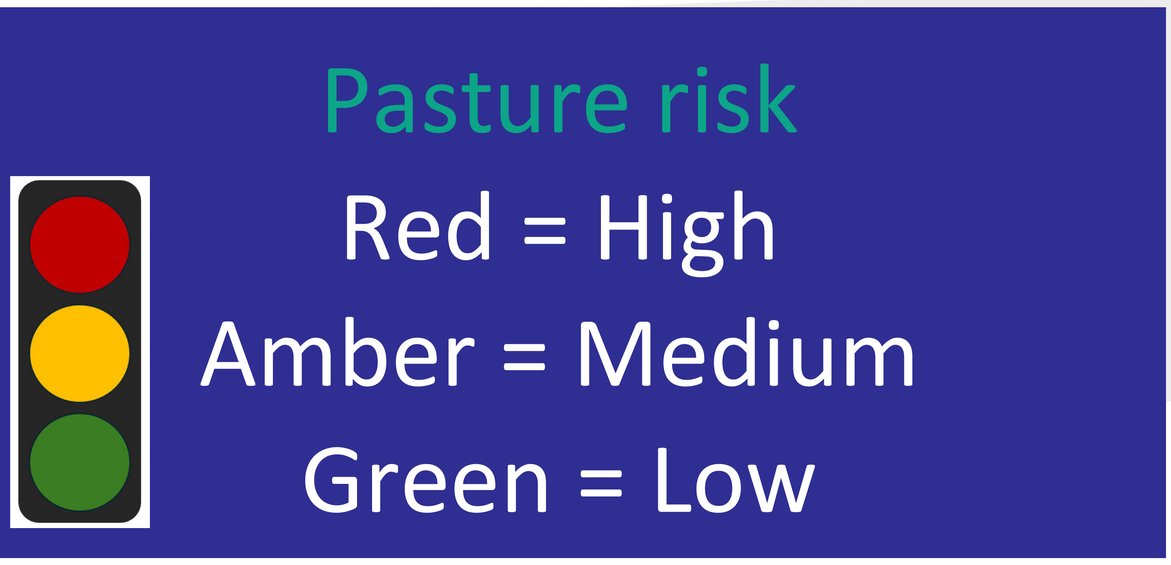
- **Reseeding: Helps to bury infective stage larvae and eggs into the soil.**
- **Mechanical hoovering: Making silage/hay etc. removes surface larvae from pasture.**
- **Animal hoovering:**

  Effectively treated animals should not be depositing eggs out on to pasture for about 3 weeks, even while still ingesting them and hoovering them up.

  Older animals with good immunity will typically have a negative impact on parasite numbers on pasture, as they ingest larvae and shed fewer eggs.

  Different species, e.g. cattle and sheep, can have different specific parasites and alternating between species can reduce the contamination.

- **Spelling Pasture: Time, dehydration, frost, solar radiation all reduce the overall viable eggs and infective stage larvae on pasture.**
- **Impact grazing: Choosing a specific paddock for young stock for the following season and working on-off grazing techniques for a few rotations using immune stock can help reduce the opportunity for egg deposition while ingesting larvae.**



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