

## Facilitating the adoption of sustainable worm control in grazing ruminants: from understanding the expectations and needs of farmers, veterinarians and advisors to testing best practices

*To facilitate the adoption of sustainable worm control (SWC) in the field, it is essential to understand expectations and needs, as well as the barriers and drivers for changing practices. That is why, in 2024 and 2025, SPARC partners conducted interviews, focus groups and online surveys with more than 1000 stakeholders (farmers, vets, advisors, researchers). Based on these findings, a number of SWC practices are now being implemented in over 300 pilot farms across the EU.*

### Needs assessment of farmers, veterinarians and advisors for sustainable worm control

According to the 300 field surveys, farmers, veterinarians and technical advisors report cases of resistance to antiparasitic drugs in all ruminant sectors across Europe. However, awareness is lower in cattle than in small ruminants. The adoption of sustainable practices remains patchy due to multiple technical, economic and social barriers. Treatment remains the top of mind, but pasture management, the use of plant-based solutions and diagnostics are gaining ground. Stakeholders in the field are waiting for good practice guides, tools for managing treatment and grazing, and short, clear and practice-oriented training courses.

### Stakeholders perceive worm control as a major cost

The online survey, receiving 932 responses from 12 countries showed that a significant number of farmers spend over 25% of their animal health budget on worm control, especially in Southern Europe (52%). However, opinions were divided about the affordability of diagnostic testing: while 32% of respondents believe diagnostic costs outweigh the benefits, a much larger group (93.8%) agrees that SWC in general can improve farm profitability.

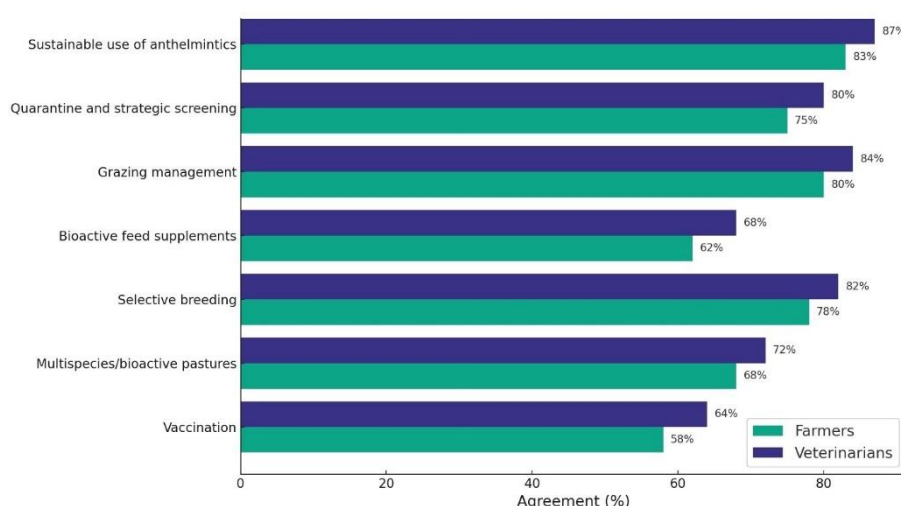
### Strong belief in sustainable practices—but knowledge gaps remain

According to the survey, the three most highly valued SWC strategies were:

- Sustainable use of anthelmintics: 87% of vets and 83% of farmers agree it brings economic value.
- Grazing management: Supported by 84% of vets and 80% of farmers.
- Quarantine and strategic screening: Backed by 80% of vets and 75% of farmers. However, there were considerable differences in the responses between countries

Other practices such as bioactive feed supplements, multispecies pastures, and vaccination received more moderate support. Notably, vaccination was considered economically beneficial by only 64% of vets and 58% of farmers. Indeed, very few vaccine options are currently available against worm infections. Farmers, especially in Southern and Western Europe, were more likely to respond “I don’t know” to questions about specific SWC practices, indicating a need for improved communication and knowledge exchange. The shown graph gives a summary of the stakeholder economic perception on different SWC strategies. [You can read the full survey report here.](#)

*Do you think the following methods could be an economically beneficial way to control worm infections in the farm?*



The results of these surveys show the importance of targeted outreach and training. Although there is strong support for SWC overall, successful implementation depends on raising awareness and building practical knowledge, particularly among farmers unfamiliar with the range of tools available.

## From need to action in demo farms

Based on the survey results, SPARC looks how tailor-made SWC practices can be applied across Europe, with some being assessed in more than one country (e.g., targeted treatment based on bulk tank milk antibody levels and the Wormwise protocol will be used in dairy cows in Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Spain and Poland). The SWC practices may vary between countries to adapt to local roundworm epidemiology, climate and/or farm management conditions. Selected SWC practices were developed into shared protocols, to ensure consistency as far as possible when applying the SWC practices on different farms, taking into account regional and production type-specific requirements. In total, 28 SWC protocols were written, to be applied on over 300 pilot farms in 9 countries, i.e., 14 protocols for cattle (10 dairy, 3 beef and 1 both) and 15 for small ruminants (7 sheep, 8 sheep and goats). Application of these protocols has now started on the pilot farms with the beginning of the 2025 grazing season.

To keep up to date with the SPARC activities, please visit the SPARC website: [www.wormsparc.com](http://www.wormsparc.com) You will find Practical Abstracts, as well as the March 2025 SPARC webinar on the project's initial findings, including one detailed presentation on the surveys.

### *SPARC – Lighting the Path to Sustainable Parasite Control*

SPARC is a Horizon Europe project, established in 2024 with a mission to build a European Community of Practice involving all interested stakeholders and build a European vision and practices on sustainable worm control. The final goal is to increase the performance and the resilience of ruminant livestock farms by widely disseminating best practices, tools and solutions on sustainable worm control that improve (1) animal health and welfare on the farms; (2) economic performance, and (3) the environmental sustainability of the sector.

SPARC is a cooperation between 15 partners in 10 countries coordinated by Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (ILVO) and Kreavet in Belgium. The partners involved are Ghent University (BE), Università Degli Studi di Napoli Federico II (IT), Hellenic Agricultural Organisation (ELGO)-DIMITRA (GR), Zuidelijke Land- En Tuinbouw Organisatie (NL), Institut de l'Elevage (FR), Animal Health Ireland (IE), Bioresearch Laboratories (GR), Agencia Estatal Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (ES), Toinen Pro Art Fundacja (PL), Centre Interregional d'information et de Recherche en Production Ovinele Mourier (FR), Boehringer Ingelheim (DE), The Queen's University of Belfast (UK) and Moredun Research Institute (UK).

Connect with SPARC by visiting our website: [www.wormsparc.com](http://www.wormsparc.com) or by following us on social media @wormsparcEU. For media inquiries, please contact Johannes Charlier, SPARC project coordinator at [jcharlier@kreavet.com](mailto:jcharlier@kreavet.com)



**Sustainable PARasite Control  
in Grazing Ruminants**