Wormwise, where is it at? How can I be involved?

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Wormwise current situation

Introduction

This paper sets out to provide an update on how Wormwise (WW) is progressing since the last update given by Trevor Cook in 2013. Trevor outlined the history of WW and the functions of WW. I will try to provide a current snapshot of what is happening at the WW coalface and how I believe New Zealand veterinarians can make the most of a fantastic resource about internal parasites of ruminants in New Zealand.

WW has a strategy that was updated in May 2012. This document provides the framework for all WW activities. It is something that is constantly referred to when carrying out WW activities at all levels, I have re-read it before writing this! This strategy document is available in the public forum and I have appended it to this manuscript.

Funding

Beef + Lamb NZ (B+LNZ) are currently the major sponsors of WW. There are also in-kind contributions from NZVA, Agcarm and MPI. In time it is hoped that WW will seek other financial contributions from organisations such as DairyNZ and DINZ. This will have a two-fold benefit, one being further resources to carry out WW activities plus also involvement from other agricultural sectors that are needing support around the control of internal parasitism.

Organisational structure

To become more independent WW has set about to form a charitable trust and become a contractor to B+LNZ. This will enable WW to be more autonomous and also be accountable for its actions. By the time this is in print the final documents should be signed and finished.

Website

The WW website has been reviewed by the Wormwise Technical Advisory Group (TAG). The website should be live by the time this is in print also. The website aims to provide a summary of all the relevant WW information for farmers and to provide links and resources for anyone wanting to drill deeper into parasite management. The website link is www.wormwise.co.nz

Wormwise implementation group (WIG)

The WIG has a role of ensuring that the key strategies and activities of WW are carried out. Part of this is ensuring that all information presented by WW has been read and accepted by the TAG. It also explores opportunities for WW to develop and grow. WIG currently consists of six members representing NZVA, MPI, Agcarm, B+LNZ and the B+LNZ Farmer Council.
Extension planning

WIG is currently in the process of developing an extension plan. The aim is to have a two-tiered extension plan. One tier will be a ‘train the trainer’ approach where advisors are educated about parasite management. The other tier will be at a farmer level where WIG will work with B+LNZ to have extension events within the regional delivery framework. This planning will start in earnest when the aforementioned tasks have been completed.

Parasite advisory day (PAD)

A parasite advisory day was run with WW funding last October the day after the New Zealand Society of Parasitologists conference in Palmerston North. The day was aimed at advisors of farmers about internal parasitism. The day attracted 80 delegates from throughout New Zealand and all the feedback was very positive. The day covered parasite epidemiology, parasite management plans, short presentations and a ‘post-it note’ session where WW surveyed attendants about what they would like to see from WW.

Principles

The WW principles were reviewed by TAG at a meeting in March 2014. The revised WW principles are as follows:

• Healthy animals harbour worms and always will – eradication is neither an appropriate goal nor achievable.
• Well fed animals are less affected by worms than those under nutritional stress.
• Older animals are generally less susceptible to worms than younger ones, and, at times, can be used to reduce the number of infective larvae on pastures.
• Animals vary in their susceptibility to parasites (genetic variability).
• Animals can be selectively bred for resistance or resilience to roundworms.
• Each farm is unique and effective worm management may be different from farm to farm.
• When breeding for a characteristic, increased selection pressure will result in more rapid change being made (applies both to livestock and parasites).
• Breeding for a single trait leads to more rapid change than breeding for a combination of traits.
• Most of the year there are more worms, in the various life stages, on pasture than inside the animals.
• Anthelmintics are a finite resource. The way in which you use drenches and manage parasites can change the rate at which you select for resistant worms.
• Long-acting drench formulations may hasten development of drench resistance. Once present on a farm, resistance to anthelmintics can be considered permanent.
• Anthelmintics used in combination can delay the onset of resistance.
• A population of undrenched worms should be maintained on farm.

Booklet

The WW booklet is also being reviewed and re-written by TAG during this year and should be ready later this year.

Farmer newsletter

A quarterly farmer newsletter is produced by WW and circulated via rural media. This will also be available to vets via publication in Vetscript.

How can I be involved?

Part of the WW strategy is to encourage vets in particular to take ownership of the key WW principles. Vets are key influencers in the agricultural industry and, I believe, are the best placed to provide advice about parasite control in New Zealand farm systems. The result of vets taking ownership of WW principles will be clear consistent messages being disseminated to farmers.
‘Train the trainer’ events

Days such as the PAD provide invaluable information to vets about parasite management which can then be taken back into their practice to use with clients.

Regional extension events

B+LNZ produce a weekly electronic dairy of events call e-diary. Its purpose is to coordinate industry events and reduce the risk of “double ups”. It is available to all farmers and industry partners and by registering with your local B+LNZ extension manager, you will be able to receive the e-diary weekly to keep you informed about when various extension events are occurring, including WW events.

In addition, B+LNZ in association with Wormwise, are developing a Wormwise Workshop for farmers and industry. These workshops will be run by approved practitioners to deliver consistent messages and resources using the Wormwise principles. I would consider these events an excellent platform for vets to launch their own parasite management extension within their practice.

Parasite management plans

A parasite management plan is an essential part of any farming system but there are very few farms that will have one in place. There is an opportunity to generate a parasite management plan on any farm but once a FECRT has been completed it becomes a great stepping stone to get one done. By getting a solid understanding of the farm system and stocking policies coupled with using WW principles and the data from the FECRT a comprehensive parasite management plan can be tailored to the farm.

Website

Once live the WW website will be an excellent place for veterinarians to go for all things WW. As mentioned above there will be a great summary of all the WW principles and also various resources relating to WW. We are hoping that the website will also contain case based learning tools for vets to work through and gain experience in managing parasite issues on farms. These cases are real farms that have been in the Best Practice Parasite Management Plan which ran for four years finishing in 2013.
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