



## NSA Policy Position

### NSA policy position on organophosphate (OP) sheep dips

#### **Background**

- Organophosphate (OP) dips offer sheep farmers tick, lice, ked, sheep scab and blowfly control
- Sheep scab is very contagious, but preventable and eradicable.
- Human health benefits from tick control as ticks can transmit Lyme disease, which can destroy grouse populations and have impacts on other wildlife species.
- OP dips are highly toxic and must only ever be purchased and used under the supervision of someone holding an NPTC Certificate of Competence in the Safe Use of Sheep Dips.
- Container design (closed transfer systems) must be respected, instructions on dosage and administration followed, protective clothing worn and safe storage and disposal practiced. Meat withdrawal periods must be followed exactly.
- A small number of farmers and farm workers connect their ill health to Ops. This is thought to be due to insufficient protection.

#### **NSA Believes**

- New sheep treatment methods, for scab in particular, should be developed to give farmers more options and reduce the resistance pressure on existing treatments.
- NHS budget for rural GPs could be targeted at encouraging better understanding around farming related ill health.
- All veterinary products should be used responsibly, following the manufacturers guidelines to ensure the safety of the administrator and animal, protecting the environment, as well as protecting the continued efficacy of the product.
- It is vital OP dips remain available for sheep farmers to use as a plunge dip, as sheep scab is a major health, welfare and economic concern.
- It is essential that licences for on-farm disposal, as well as options for contract dippers to take waste product away with them, are easy to access and affordable. A close working relationship between Defra and the Environment Agency is essential.



## Reasoning

- The only alternative to OPs for scab control are the injectable Macrocyclic Lactones (MLs) – ivermectin, doramectin and moxidectin and scab mites are becoming resistant to these products.
- The dose of ML needed depends on the weight of the animal, so careful calibration and measuring is required to ensure that the product is fully effective. The dose, timings and site of injection vary, therefore manufacture instructions must be checked before use and followed carefully.
- Expensive or complex used dip disposal licenses and systems will mean uptake is low and environmental and animal health will suffer.

## Future

- As ML products are also very effective against internal parasites, it is essential that both internal and external parasite controls are considered together. The current incidence of ML resistance by gastrointestinal parasites is increasing worldwide, as well as in the UK. Efforts to promote plunge dipping in recent years should protect the efficacy of MLs.
- A Code of Practice has been launched by the Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep (SCOPS) group, in conjunction with the National Association of Agricultural Contractors (NAAC), to ensure access to the best advice on effective treatment of sheep scab with OP sheep dip, minimising risks to users and the environment. [The Code of Practice is available here](#)

### Updates:

May 2014

April 2015

January 2019

May 2019

December 2021

April 2025