



Sheep scab ELISA

Biobest Laboratories are pleased to offer a sheep scab ELISA blood test which was developed at the Moredun Research Institute. This test can be used for the diagnosis of sheep scab infestation and to monitor flock status to aid scab control programmes.

Sheep scab is caused by infestation with the mite *Psoroptes ovis*. It is endemic in the UK and the disease is notifiable in Scotland, although not in England and Wales. Sheep scab is a significant concern both in terms of animal welfare and the productivity of sheep farms.

The test detects antibodies in the host sheep to a protein found in the sheep scab mite and not in other common parasites, such as lice. It can be used to detect evidence of exposure to scab mites and can pick up infestation in the early stages. Biobest have evaluated the test and have used it in a number of different flock types (lowland, upland, hill, with / without common grazing) to determine how it may best be applied. When used to test 12 sheep per flock the test can provide useful insight into flock status. When the results from testing are coupled with information about flock management and scab control activities, then tailored advice can be provided to improve scab control or to show that in some flocks, where there is no evidence of scab, it is possible to cut out unnecessary treatments with OP dips or injectable macrocyclic lactones. This is very important as the injectable scab treatments are also anthelmintics, and there is increasing resistance in worms to these medicines. Recently there have been reports of resistance in scab mites also. The blood test is part of the armoury to tackle sheep scab in flocks. It may also be useful in investigating clinical disease outbreaks and in quarantine testing of purchased or returning stock.

Speaking on behalf of SCOPS, Lesley Stubbings says 'The SCOPS group welcomes the launch of this new test. Not only could the test have a significant positive impact on the control of Sheep Scab, but it may also help us reduce the pressure on the group 3 ML (clear) group of anthelmintics by improving diagnosis and the targeting of treatments' The blood test requires serum (red top vacutainers) and will be run once a week.

A brief questionnaire is completed to allow the best advice to be provided along with the results. For further information or to discuss the application of the test in regional / local scab eradication initiatives or to provide evidence of freedom from infection in defined areas please contact Rebecca Mearns at rebecca.mearns@biobest.co.uk. Rebecca can also provide information on Biobest's HiHealth Flockcare scheme which gives sheep farmers, and their vets, access to specialist veterinary advice on testing and offers discounted laboratory fees.

*currently subsidised by Bimeda

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