



Winter performance is often determined well before conditions tighten.

As pasture quality declines and energy demand increases, cattle can begin to lose condition quickly if not managed early. While feed availability is a key part of the picture, it's not the only factor influencing how animals perform through the colder months.

Condition, nutrition and trace mineral status all play a role — and the impacts aren't always immediately obvious.

Preparation matters

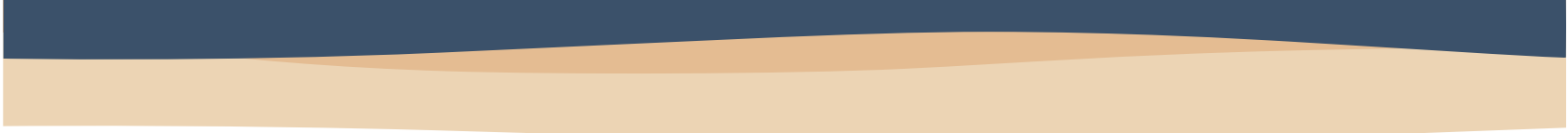
Cattle heading into winter in lighter condition are more vulnerable to production losses, slower growth and reduced reproductive performance.

For breeders, this can affect conception rates and recovery post-calving. For growing cattle, it can mean setbacks that take time — and cost — to recover from.

By the time condition visibly declines, it can be difficult to regain ground. That's why early preparation is key.

Pasture quality and intake

As temperatures drop, pasture growth slows and feed quality typically declines. Even where feed appears adequate, it may not meet the nutritional requirements of the animal.



Energy and protein are often the primary focus, but trace minerals can also become limiting — particularly in systems where pasture composition or seasonal conditions reduce availability.

The role of trace minerals

Trace minerals such as zinc, copper, manganese and selenium are involved in a range of biological functions, including immune response, reproduction and metabolic processes.

Deficiencies are not always obvious. In many cases, they are subclinical — meaning animals may appear normal but are not performing at their full potential.

These hidden gaps can become more significant during periods of increased demand, such as pregnancy, lactation or growth, and during seasonal transitions like the lead into winter.

Key times

The lead-up to winter is a useful time to review cattle health and nutrition, particularly for:

- Weaners and growing cattle
- Pregnant and lactating cows
- Cattle under environmental or nutritional stress

Taking a proactive approach can help maintain condition and support performance through the colder months.

Supporting cattle through seasonal change



Managing cattle through winter is rarely about a single input. It's a combination of feed planning, monitoring condition and addressing any nutritional gaps before they become limiting.

Where trace mineral status may be a factor, targeted supplementation can play a role alongside broader nutrition strategies.

Products such as Acti-Trace and Acti-Trace with B12 provide a convenient option for delivering essential trace minerals and Vitamin B12 during key production stages or periods of increased demand.

Winter brings its challenges, but the impact on cattle performance is largely shaped by decisions made in the lead-up.

By focusing on condition, nutrition and trace mineral status early, producers can better position their cattle to maintain performance and recover more effectively when conditions improve.

Drying off is more than just the end of a lactation period — it's a key opportunity to reset cows and set them up for the next production cycle.



How cows are managed during this time can influence body condition, recovery, and ultimately reproductive performance in the following season.

Why drying off matters

The drying off period allows cows to redirect energy away from milk production and toward maintenance, recovery and preparing for the next joining.

Cows that remain under nutritional pressure for too long can struggle to regain condition, which may impact:

- Conception rates
- Calving outcomes
- Overall productivity in the next cycle

Managing this transition well helps support both animal welfare and long-term performance.

Condition is key

Body condition score (BCS) is one of the most important factors to monitor when drying off.

Cows that are too light at drying off can find it difficult to regain condition, particularly as pasture quality declines heading into winter. On the other hand, cows in good condition are better positioned to maintain performance and cycle effectively at joining.



Early intervention is critical — it's far easier to maintain condition than to rebuild it later.

Nutrition through the transition

As cows dry off, their nutritional requirements change, but they don't disappear.

Energy and protein remain important, particularly where pasture quality is declining. At the same time, trace minerals continue to play a role in supporting:

- reproductive function
- immune response
- overall metabolic health

Subclinical deficiencies can limit performance without obvious signs, making them easy to overlook during this period.

Supporting recovery and fertility

The period following drying off is closely linked to reproductive performance in the next joining.

Ensuring cows have adequate nutrition and mineral status supports:

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- recovery post-lactation
 - return to cycling
 - improved conception outcomes

This is particularly important in seasonal systems where timing and fertility have a direct impact on overall herd productivity.

Taking a practical approach

Drying off should be viewed as part of a broader management strategy, rather than a single event.

Monitoring condition, reviewing feed availability and considering nutritional gaps can help ensure cows are well supported through this transition.

Where trace mineral status may be limiting, targeted supplementation can be used alongside feed planning to support recovery and performance.

Products such as Acti-Trace and Acti-Trace with B12 provide a convenient option for delivering key trace minerals and Vitamin B12 during this period.

The drying off period is an opportunity to set the foundation for the next season.

By focusing on condition, nutrition and recovery, producers can position their cattle for improved fertility and performance when it matters most.



Vitamin B12 is involved in energy metabolism, helping cattle convert nutrients from feed into usable energy.

It works closely with trace minerals such as cobalt, which is required for B12 production in the rumen. When this process is limited, energy utilisation can be affected.

Why deficiency isn't always obvious

Unlike some nutritional issues, Vitamin B12 deficiency is often subclinical. Cattle may appear healthy, but performance may be below expectations. This can include:

- reduced weight gain
- lower feed efficiency
- slower recovery during challenging periods

When to consider Vitamin B12 supplementation

Vitamin B12 supplementation may be worth considering during periods of increased demand or stress, including:

Weaning

Weaners are adapting to dietary and environmental changes, which can impact intake and energy balance.



Joining and early pregnancy

Energy requirements increase, and maintaining condition is important for reproductive performance.

Calving and lactation

Cows face increased nutritional demand, and any limitations in energy utilisation can have a greater impact.

Seasonal transitions

Changes in pasture quality – particularly heading into winter – can influence nutrient intake and availability.

Periods of stress

Transport, environmental conditions or feed changes can all place additional pressure on cattle.

Using B12 as part of a broader approach

Vitamin B12 supplementation is often used alongside trace mineral support, rather than as a standalone solution.

A targeted approach allows supplementation to be timed around periods where cattle are most likely to benefit.

Choosing the right option

Not every situation requires additional Vitamin B12, but understanding when it may be useful allows for more informed decision-making.



In operations where trace mineral status and energy demand are both considerations, combining Vitamin B12 with trace mineral supplementation can provide a more complete approach.

Products such as Acti-Trace with B12 offer a convenient way to deliver both trace minerals and Vitamin B12 in a single injection during key production stages.

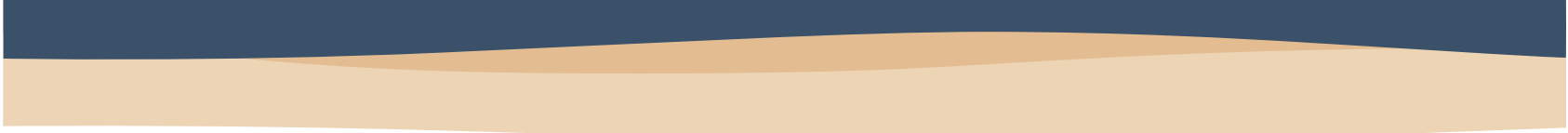
Liver fluke is one of the more complex and often overlooked parasite challenges in livestock. In the right conditions, infections can build over time and impact animal performance before obvious signs appear. For producers in higher rainfall or irrigated areas, understanding fluke risk is critical.

Unlike many gastrointestinal worms, liver fluke has a more complex lifecycle that relies on specific environmental factors, making seasonal awareness and timing critical for effective management.

Knowing when to act can make a significant difference to livestock health and productivity.

Why liver fluke risk increases in autumn

Liver fluke requires an intermediate host, typically freshwater snails, to complete its lifecycle. These snails thrive in wet areas such as drainage lines, irrigated pastures and low-lying paddocks.



Periods of rainfall and mild temperatures support both snail populations and the development of infective fluke larvae. As livestock graze these areas, they ingest the larvae, which then migrate through the animal's liver as they mature.

By autumn, livestock may have been exposed to fluke over several months, particularly in higher rainfall regions or properties with persistent wet areas. This is often when the impact on animal health and performance becomes more apparent.

Which livestock are affected by liver fluke?

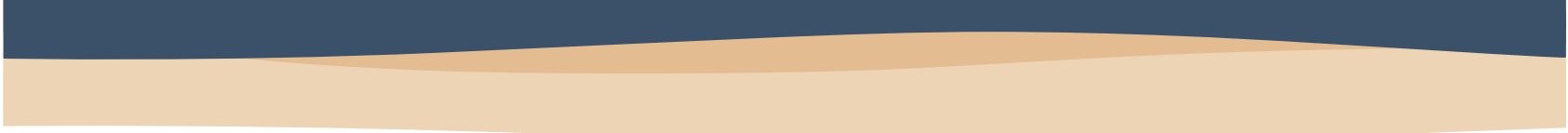
Liver fluke can affect a range of grazing livestock, most commonly sheep, cattle and goats. A large range of species are susceptible, although the impact can vary depending on the level of infection and environmental conditions.

Sheep are generally more sensitive to fluke burdens and may show more obvious production impacts, while cattle can carry infections for longer periods, often with more subtle signs.

In regions where conditions favour fluke development, both sheep and cattle should be considered at risk, particularly when grazing wet or low-lying areas.

Recognising the signs of liver fluke

Liver fluke infections can affect livestock in both acute and chronic forms, with symptoms varying depending on the level of infestation. Producers may observe:

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- reduced weight gain or poor growth
 - loss of body condition
 - anaemia (pale gums or eyelids)
 - lethargy or reduced grazing activity
 - in some cases, sudden losses in heavily affected animals

Because these signs can develop gradually, liver fluke may go unnoticed until production impacts become significant.

The impact on livestock performance

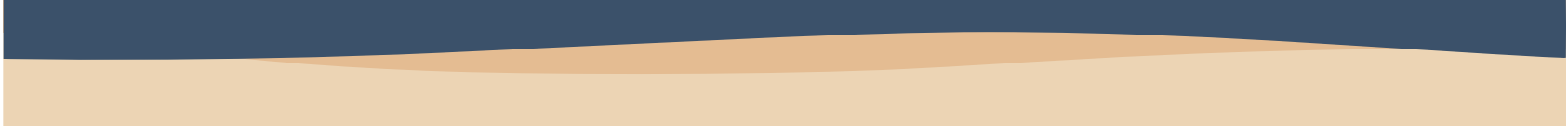
Liver fluke affects the liver, an organ critical to metabolism, nutrient processing and overall health. Damage caused by migrating fluke can reduce feed efficiency and compromise growth and productivity

In production systems, this can lead to lower weight gains, reduced fertility and overall declines in animal performance. In some cases, secondary complications may arise due to reduced immunity and general condition.

In some cases, liver fluke can lead to serious health issues and may be fatal if left untreated. Heavy infections, particularly in sheep, can cause significant liver damage and blood loss, which may result in sudden deaths.

Monitoring and managing fluke risk

Effective liver fluke control relies on understanding both the environmental risk and the lifecycle of the parasite. Identifying high-risk areas on farm, such as wet paddocks or irrigation zones, can help guide management decisions.



Diagnostic tools, including faecal egg counts and liver fluke testing, can assist in determining the presence and severity of infection. Where treatment is required, timing plays an important role. Treating too early or too late in the lifecycle can reduce effectiveness, so aligning treatments with seasonal risk is key.

Treatment options within a parasite management program

Effective liver fluke control requires a considered, multi-factored approach that considers seasonal conditions, pasture risk and the lifecycle of the parasite.

On properties where fluke is present, a management strategy may include monitoring livestock through testing, identifying high-risk paddocks, fencing off high risk wet areas and applying treatments at key times of the year. Strategic treatments can help reduce fluke burdens within livestock while also limiting pasture contamination and ongoing reinfection.

Because liver fluke develops through multiple stages within the animal, selecting a treatment that targets the stages present at the time of application is important. In autumn, livestock are often carrying a mix of early immature, immature and adult fluke, which can influence both product choice and timing.

Products such as [HRC Abatech Ultra Pour-On](#) are designed to target all three stages of liver fluke, including early immature, immature and adult fluke. This can be particularly valuable during higher-risk periods when multiple stages may be present at once.

Selecting the right treatment and applying it at the appropriate time can help reduce fluke burdens, support livestock performance and form part of a broader parasite management strategy.

If you have any concerns regarding your livestock and liver fluke, please consult your veterinarian.