"June in the New England has been remarkable because we have had way more than average rain for the month! This is noteworthy because this is our fourth year in a row with below average rain. The only other month recently in which we scored much more than average was January, and that had flow on effects, mainly with barber's pole worm, into February and March, even though we went back to the all too familiar dry pattern in late summer and autumn.

So, there is a lesson here: if viable worm eggs on pasture 'hit a purple patch', i.e. it is warm enough and wet enough for egg development and hatching, then the resulting larvae, generally much more resilient than the eggs, can survive for weeks and even months come hell or high water. OK, maybe that's an exaggeration, but below average rainfall, or cool to cold conditions, don't bother infective (3rd stage) larvae too much. What really cuts their life short is very hot days, e.g. 35 degrees plus, which we don't seem to be experiencing lately.

Barbers pole worm's (BPW) achilles heel is the egg stage. Problem 1: they are only viable on pasture for 5 days or so. Problem 2: they are delicate little princesses and need plenty of warmth and moisture in order to produce larvae. So, night and daytime temperatures over 10 and 18 degrees respectively, and 10 mm of rain or more every several days. But, BPW has a solution: fecundity! Pump out bucket loads of eggs so that when conditions are right, there are plenty of viable eggs ready to go. This is helped if sheep are set-stocked rather than rotationally grazed, the latter involving spelling of pastures, alternate grazing with cattle and perhaps cropping as well. The end result with good grazing management: fewer paddocks with lots of viable BPW eggs on them.

So, what does this mean for now? Well, although its too cold for BPW to complete it's cycle, larvae produced in autumn will survive through to spring, albeit in decreasing numbers. So, sheep can still get infected with BPW in winter. And indeed, we are seeing this. The occasional mob in this region is still scoring high worm egg counts (WECs), usually mostly BPW. The biggest count I saw recently was from Gundagai - OK, not the New England - but the average WEC was 11 000 and one sheep had a count of 20 000.

I am guessing the Gundagai farm has a drench resistance problem as well, but they are in good company as almost all producers do, and maybe 90% of producers don't have a good handle on what drenches work on their farm. The answer: at the very least, do regular DrenchChecks. It's easy-peasy and as cheap as chips, especially if you factor in the bucket loads of extra money you will make by using effective drenches.

Other worms in winter? Well, the scour worms produce eggs that are more cold- and desiccation-tolerant than BPW. Even so, the dead of winter is too much in most areas for black scour worm eggs, but the eggs of brown stomach worm might still manage to produce larvae except in the colder areas. And worms problems in winter can be made worse by sheep being nutritionally 'stretched'.

Bottom line: expect that your sheep will be picking up new worm infections over winter - and that includes liver fluke as well - especially if your grazing management wasn't so good in the autumn months, and more so if you unwittingly are using ineffective drenches as well.

The answer: keep up regular WormTesting, even in winter. This is all too much information? Here is another answer: 'Your Program' is one of your best friends. Unlike faux friends, it's always there and ready and able to help. 'Your Program' is on WormBoss and it's printer friendly, well laid out, easy to follow and practical. You can't do better." - SL, 2016-06-23