

A new praziquantel formulation for treating liver fluke in llamas and alpacas. The end of the parasite?

Llamas and alpacas are gaining popularity in the United Kingdom and Ireland. There are more than 35,000 animals registered in the two countries and the total population might well be substantially higher. As the number of llamas and alpacas grows, veterinary surgeons are increasingly confronted with diseases in these animals. Among causative agents, the liver fluke (*Dicrocoelium dendriticum*) is one of the most widespread and serious, causing considerable problems for llamas and alpacas as well as their owners and breeders.



For the past few years, scientists at the University of Veterinary Medicine, Vienna have been focusing on the health of New World camelids. They have recently developed a pharmaceutical formulation that is ideally suited for the oral treatment of llamas and alpacas. The patented formulation contains a high dose of the therapeutic drug **praziquantel** and **a single administration is highly effective** against the liver fluke. The results were published in 2013 (A.M. Dadak et al., Vet Parasitol 2013, 197: 122-125). The substance is administered by means of a syringe and the animals readily swallow all the gel. This is important, as giving too low a dose of the drug may lead to resistance (this is why similar products on the market for horses and sheep are not suitable for use in llamas and alpacas).

Llamas and alpacas are generally held in herds and it is recommended to treat the entire herd at once, preferably in spring and in autumn. Doing so will considerably reduce the risk of an infection with the liver fluke, which is transmitted via snails and ants as intermediate hosts.

The praziquantel formulation can be prescribed by a veterinary surgeon and ordered from DrugsDirect Pharmacy, Unit 4, 12 Emery Road, Brislington, Bristol BS4 5PF.

Further information on health aspects of New World camelids is available from your veterinary surgeon or from the Llama and Alpaca societies in the UK and Ireland. The experts Prof. Agnes Dadak and Prof. Sonja Franz at the University of Veterinary Medicine in Vienna, Austria may be contacted via the e-mail address wiederkaeuerklinik@vetmeduni.ac.at .