

# Scientists to tackle burden of cattle disease on UK farms

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Liver fluke is transmitted by the dwarf pond snail. Credit: University of Liverpool

Researchers from the University of Liverpool are leading a new campaign to tackle a disease in cattle that costs the UK economy £300m each year.

The £1 million project will look at how to improve the detection and control of [liver fluke](#), a disease that is transmitted by the dwarf pond snail and is found on over 75% of UK dairy farms.

The disease causes [cattle](#) to lose weight, become anaemic, lethargic and reduces productivity in dairy and beef herds. Outside of the UK, there have also been examples of it being transmitted to humans.

Veterinary parasitologist, Professor Diana Williams, from the University's Institute of Infection and Global Health, said: "This disease is on the increase, partly due to climate change and changes in farming practices and it is fast becoming difficult to treat because of growing resistance to medication."

To combat this problem, scientists at Liverpool are collaborating with the farming industry, to undertake a four-year research programme that will improve management of the disease; use drug treatment sustainably; create practical differences in farming techniques; and develop detection processes to mitigate the impact of the [disease](#) on the UK farming industry.

As well as improving the use of treatments at specific times of year to slow the development of drug resistance, the team will create a system to categorise snail habitats that can be used alongside satellite imagery for individual farms.

Professor Williams added: "We will also look at husbandry practices and physical and environmental factors from a study of 250 farms to feed into statistical and mathematical models that will help us determine more effectively why some farms have fluke whilst others in close proximity do not."

Provided by University of Liverpool

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