Parasite Forecast

Issue 19 2025

ESCCAP

EUROPEAN SCIENTIFIC COUNSEL COMPANION ANIMAL PARASITES®

UK & Ireland

Welcome

Welcome to ESCCAP UK & Ireland parasite forecast for 2025.

Prof. Hany Elsheikha

Head of ESCCAP UK & Ireland

The parasitic landscape affecting companion animals in the across the UK and more broadly across the British Isles is undergoing rapid transformation. Once largely seasonal or region-specific, many parasites are now found year-round and in areas where they were previously absent. This shift is driven by several converging factors—climate change, increased pet travel, and changes in wildlife populations—all contributing to the spread and establishment of new parasitic threats.

These changes present a growing risk not only to the health and wellbeing of dogs and cats, but also to human health, as zoonotic risks increase. Simultaneously, the veterinary sector faces an evolving set of challenges: inconsistent approaches to parasite prevention, rising diagnostic demands, emerging resistance to treatments, environmental concerns, and ongoing gaps in client awareness and education.

In the field of veterinary medicine, few areas demand innovation more urgently than parasite management. For years, blanket treatments have dominated the space, often effective, but increasingly unsustainable. Overreliance on these approaches carries growing risks, including resistance development, environmental impact, and reduced efficacy. Moving toward responsible parasite control means adopting more targeted, evidence-based strategies that protect animal health while preserving the long-term effectiveness of our treatment tools.

Many of us in the profession are rightly concerned about the continued reliance on a one-size-fits-all approach to parasite control—especially given the lack of robust evidence, driven in part by limited funding for companion animal parasitology research.

In response to this pressing need, **ESCCAP UK & Ireland** was established with a clear and forward-looking mission rooted in a holistic approach to animal, human, and environmental health. Our goals focus on three key pillars:

- **Caring for pets.** Promoting the health, comfort, and wellbeing of companion animals through science-based prevention and treatment strategies.
- **Caring for people.** Supporting pet owners and veterinary professionals with accessible, reliable information to protect both animal and public health.
- **Caring for the planet.** Encouraging responsible, sustainable use of veterinary medicines to minimise environmental impact and preserve treatment efficacy for the future.

2025 Parasite Forecast

At the core of our mission is the **responsible use of antiparasitics and effective use of diagnostic tools**—an essential cornerstone of parasite control. Effective parasite management begins with accurate diagnostics, ensuring treatments are targeted and necessary. When used wisely, these treatments remain among our most powerful tools in protecting animal health, advancing One Health objectives, and maintaining ecological balance.

To bring this vision to life, we are committed to:

- **Establishing partnerships.** Working collaboratively with veterinary associations, researchers, and public health organisations to align efforts and maximise collective impact.
- **Driving policy.** Advocating for practical, evidence-based regulations that support effective and sustainable parasite prevention

With this in mind, we've developed this forecast that explores these timely topics, including:

- Seasonal risks of ticks, fleas, lungworms
- Seasonal risk overview of UK intestinal parasites
- Emerging risks in parasites across the UK
- Thematic trends in veterinary parasitology queries
- The disconnect between best-practice guidance and real-world implementation

Understanding these trends is important for safeguarding both animal and public health in an increasingly complex parasite landscape.

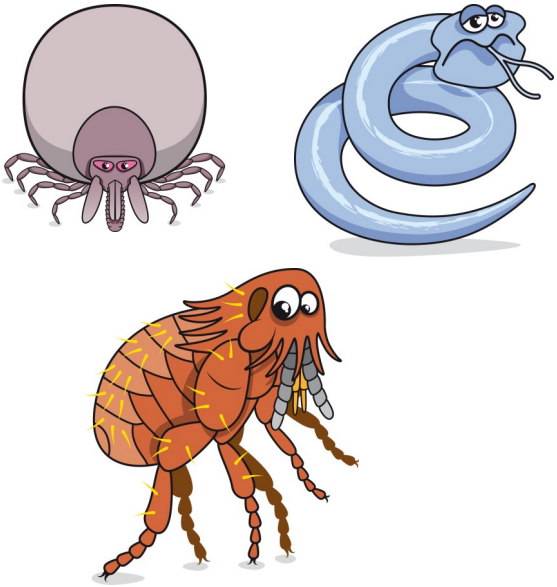
Parasite Forecast Issue 19/2025

Email: info@esccapuk.org.uk /

Website: Homepage | ESCCAP UK & Ireland

Seasonal Risks of Ticks, Fleas and Lungworms

SAVSNET real-time tick data has shown a prolonged peak in activity from early spring to late autumn in 2024, with continued presence into December. If warm, wet weather persists, tick activity is likely to remain high. Pet owners should stay alert and ensure appropriate protection for themselves and their animals. Recent rainfall and rising humidity are bolstering slug activity, increasing *Angiostrongylus vasorum* exposure risk for dogs. Lungworm infection can cause serious disease, including potentially fatal bleeding disorders. Clinical signs range from coughing and lethargy to mucosal bleeding, seizures, or hindlimb weakness due to neurological involvement. Dogs showing unexplained coagulopathy or neurological signs should be tested. Monthly preventatives are advised for dogs in high-risk areas.
Recent research has shown infected dogs with coagulopathies are over 4× more likely to die or be euthanised. Bleeding signs should now be considered a negative prognostic indicator in A. vasorum infection.



When enjoying the outdoors follow these steps:

1. **Licensed preventative tick treatment—Products containing an isooxazoline or pyrethroid rapidly kill or repel ticks.**
2. **Check for ticks after outdoor activity—check around the head, face, legs and ventrum as well as other areas.**
3. **Stick to paths—long grass or overgrown areas will increase risk of tick exposure and attachment.**
4. **Use a licensed and effective tick repellent / preventative product if you do wander off into the foliage.**

Seasonal Risk Overview Of UK Intestinal Parasites

In the UK, intestinal parasites in dogs and cats pose a year-round risk. The presence and prevalence of certain parasites can be influenced by environmental conditions and pet behaviour. For example, *Toxocara* spp. (roundworms) are commonly found throughout the year, with environmental factors such as moisture and temperature potentially affecting egg survival and transmission. **Hookworms**, such as *Ancylostoma* and *Uncinaria*, tend to peak from late spring through autumn, thriving in warmer, damp environments that support larval development. **Tapeworms**, particularly *Dipylidium caninum*, are more commonly seen during the warmer months when flea activity is highest, while *Taenia* infections, often linked to hunting and scavenging behaviour, can occur year-round in outdoor pets. In rural regions, ***Echinococcus granulosus*** (hydatid tapeworm) remains a persistent year-round concern, particularly where dogs have access to livestock carcasses. Understanding these seasonal patterns supports more targeted parasite prevention strategies, encouraging risk-based treatment over routine blanket deworming.

Emerging Risk

Flaviviruses & Tick-Borne Encephalitis Virus (TBEV)

Endemic TBEV has been confirmed in areas of the UK (including Thetford Forest, East Anglia, and the Hampshire/Dorset border) with 2–3% of local ticks carrying the virus. Both humans and dogs may develop severe neurological signs in symptomatic cases, with a 33% fatality rate in symptomatic dogs. TBEV detection in labs becomes notifiable in England from April 2025. Clinicians should remain alert for a biphasic illness with neurologic progression in dogs, especially in endemic regions.

Leishmaniosis in UK Dogs

UK surveillance shows rising *Leishmania infantum* seropositivity in tested dogs. While most canine cases are still linked to overseas travel (especially Spain, Greece, Cyprus), a growing number of autochthonous cases have been reported in the southeast of England, likely via close contact or vertical transmission, as sandfly vectors are not present in the UK. Clinical signs include skin lesions, weight loss, lymphadenopathy, and renal issues. Vets should consider *Leishmania* even in dogs without a history of travel.

ESCCAP UK & Ireland Enquiries—Parasite Query Data Across Four Quarters

We continue to receive queries from colleagues all year round. Nearly all queries are answered by Dr Ian Wright, the Head of ESCCAP and a member of ESCCAP UK & Ireland. *Who else can do it better?*

Besides providing a valuable service to the veterinary community, we analyze seasonal and thematic trends in veterinary parasitology queries to enhance diagnostic awareness, improve client communication, and inform targeted parasite prevention strategies in clinical practice. Below we provide a detailed summary of the major trends emerging from parasite queries, along with reflections and recommendations.

High-frequency parasites across the year

Some parasite types consistently received high attention across multiple quarters:

- ***Leishmania***: Appears every quarter and peaks in Q4. This consistent interest may be due to: Rising cases or increased awareness, pet travel concerns to endemic areas, and/or seasonal upticks related to vector activity.
- ***Toxocara***: Queries remain fairly stable, suggesting sustained concern likely due to its zoonotic potential and common occurrence in both cats and dogs.
- **Fleas and dog/cat tapeworms**: Appear frequently, which reflects ongoing seasonal and preventive care questions. Their association with each other (fleas being an intermediate host for some tapeworms) may explain their parallel trends.
- ***Ixodes* ticks/Lyme**: Grows in relevance through the year, peaking in Q4. Suggests seasonal rise (autumn activity), growing public health awareness (Lyme disease), or better tick surveillance.

Seasonal or sporadic parasites of interest

- **Heartworm (*Dirofilaria immitis*)**: Notably queried in Q1 and Q4. Could align with preventive care conversations ahead of peak mosquito season and retrospective diagnosis post-season.
- ***Angiostrongylus vasorum* (lungworm)**: Low in Q1/Q2, spikes in Q4. This suggests increased risk awareness during wetter seasons (ideal slug/snail conditions).
- ***Ehrlichia*/*Anaplasma*/*Babesia*/*Rhipicephalus***: Intermittent interest — mostly tick-borne and may reflect growing concern around vector-borne diseases or imported cases.
- **Pet travel**: Featured in Q1 and Q4 — likely correlates with holiday planning and movement to endemic areas.
- **Faecal diagnostics/testing**: Present in Q2 and Q1; possibly tied to routine checks or awareness campaigns.
- **Environmental contamination and anthelmintic resistance**: Low query volume but important themes indicating evolving professional awareness.

Rare or niche parasites

A large tail of parasites appeared only once or twice — including ***Thelazia*, *Demodex*, *Strongyloides*, *Neospora*, *Hepatozoon*, etc.** These likely represent complex or rare clinical cases, academic or CPD-related queries, or regional parasite variations.

Reflections

The query data reflects **cyclical seasonality, client-driven concerns**, and **professional learning interests.** There is clear **demand for guidance on emerging or neglected parasites**, particularly vector-borne diseases and travel-related conditions. The spread of **zoonotic parasites** (e.g., *Toxocara*, *Leishmania*, *Angiostrongylus*) shows increasing public and professional concern about **One Health topics**. The long tail of low-frequency queries highlights the need for **accessible, up-to-date parasitology resources**.

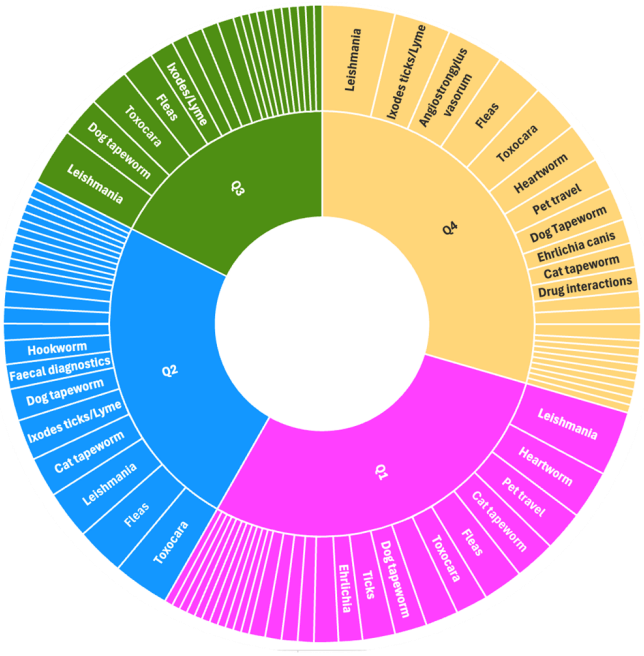


Figure. *Seasonal distribution of parasite-related queries received over four quarters.* The figure illustrates the frequency of queries concerning various parasite types from Q1 to Q4. *Leishmania*, *Toxocara*, and Fleas consistently appeared among the most queried parasites, indicating sustained clinical and client interest. Seasonal peaks were observed for *Ixodes ticks/ Lyme disease* and *Angiostrongylus vasorum* in Q4, suggesting heightened awareness or risk during colder, wetter months. The data highlights both common and emerging parasitic concerns in veterinary practice, informing targeted education and preventive strategies.

Recommendations

To keep pace with the evolving parasite landscape, veterinary teams can adopt the following strategies to improve client education, diagnostics, and clinical outcomes:

Deliver seasonal, targeted client education

- **Collect and share quarterly parasite awareness reports** tailored to local and seasonal risks—such as ticks (spring to autumn) or lungworm (autumn)—to keep both staff and clients informed.
- **Update and share travel parasite guidance** ahead of peak travel periods (e.g., early spring and autumn), ensuring pet owners are aware of destination-specific risks and prevention needs.

Prioritise ongoing professional development

- **Host webinars or short learning sessions** for your team on lesser-known or emerging pathogens, such as *Angiostrongylus vasorum*, *Thelazia callipaeda*, and *Brucella canis*.
- **Share unusual or complex cases** within your team to support reflective learning and reinforce real-world clinical application.

Strengthen client communication

- **Develop engaging infographics and social media content** focused on common concerns like fleas, ticks, and intestinal worms—topics that resonate most with pet owners.
- **Align preventive care messages with seasonal parasite activity**, helping clients understand *when* and *why* to act.

Boost diagnostic confidence and capability

- **Enhance your team's understanding of faecal diagnostics**, resistance patterns, and appropriate testing protocols through internal training or external CPD.
- **Use case-based examples** to build confidence in interpreting results for conditions like *Giardia*, *Cryptosporidium*, or complex co-infections.

Stay proactive with emerging threats

- **Monitor trends in client queries and clinical presentations** to spot early signs of emerging threats such as *Brucella canis*, tick-borne encephalitis (TBE), or exotic ticks like *Rhipicephalus sanguineus*.
- **Collaborate with public health bodies or veterinary parasitology networks** to stay informed and contribute to local surveillance efforts.

By implementing these strategies, veterinary practices can move away from a one-size-fits-all approach and adopt a more tailored, evidence-informed model of parasite prevention—protecting both animal and public health more effectively.

Closing The Implementation Gap

Despite clear, evidence-based guidelines from organisations such as ESCCAP, BVA, and BSAVA, a significant gap persists between recommended parasite prevention protocols and their consistent application in everyday practice. Many pets remain under-treated, particularly those showing no clinical signs, with studies revealing that owners frequently fall short of the advised frequency for flea, tick, and worm control. This disconnect is driven by a range of factors—including limited client awareness, concerns about cost, treatment fatigue, and the belief that parasite risks are only seasonal or geographically limited. At ESCCAP UK & Ireland we believe that collaboration could help all stakeholders navigate these challenges.

As our understanding of parasite ecology and resistance grows, veterinary professionals are in a unique position to lead a shift toward more sustainable, risk-based approaches. These strategies focus on local prevalence, pet lifestyle, and seasonality rather than blanket year-round treatments. Success in this evolving model depends on clear client communication, practical risk assessment tools, and shared decision-making. By empowering owners with tailored advice and involving them in preventive planning, we not only improve compliance and outcomes but also build trust and long-term engagement.

Parasite risks continue to shift with the seasons and changing pet behaviours. This forecast is designed to help you stay informed, proactive, and ready to adapt your recommendations with confidence. We'll continue to monitor emerging trends and provide updates—until then, stay prepared, stay practical, and keep parasite prevention centred on both science and the needs of individual pets and their owners.

We're proud to continue our support for the open benchmark competition **'ESCCAP UK & Ireland Parasite Control Champion of the Year'**, and the important role it plays in encouraging innovation in parasite control in companion animals. If you or a colleague have gone above and beyond to improve parasite prevention strategies, client education, or responsible prescribing—**we'd like to hear your story**.

Nominations are open.

All entries will be considered and the **winning person will be awarded £500** in addition to the title of, **"Parasite Control Champion of the Year!"** Click on the QR code and enter the details under the Champion of the Year section for your chance to win.

Subscribe!

To subscribe to future editions of Parasite Forecast, please click here

Subscribe to Newsletter | ESCCAP UK & Ireland

The newsletter aims to keep veterinary practices, industry and academia up to date with our activities so if there is anything you would like us to include, feel free to contact us at www.esccapuk.org or email me at info@esccapuk.org.uk. Similarly, if you would like to contribute a case report or inform us about anything in relation to our next forecast, please let us know.

ESCCAP UK & Ireland website Forum

ESCCAP UK & Ireland Supporters 2025

Sponsors:

Antech
Smarter Diagnostics. Better Care.™

Boehringer Ingelheim

Elanco™

IDEXX

MSD

vetoquinol
ACHIEVE MORE TOGETHER

zoetis

Fellowships:

Companion animal

iRecall®

PETPANION

The Veterinary Nurse

VETRx
VETERINARY PRESCRIBER

LRC
LYME RESOURCE CENTRE