

Prevalence of gastrointestinal nematodes in organic dairy goats in Flanders

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Problem

Gastrointestinal parasites affect animal health and lead to production losses in ruminants. Prevailing methods to control the infection level in dairy goats are preventive treatment with anthelmintics or applying a zero-grazing strategy. Organic goats, however, are obliged to graze outside, whilst preventive treatment is not allowed, thus increasing the risk of disease after ingesting infectious larvae on the grass.



Objective

1. Quantify the magnitude of worm infections in all organic dairy goat farms in Flanders throughout the grazing season of 2015;
2. Identify the dominant worm species.

Methodology

Individual faecal samples of 10% of the dairy goats were taken at random every four weeks on ten farms from February until September 2015.



The samples were pooled and the faecal egg count was determined using the McMaster method and expressed in eggs per gram (EPG). A mean faecal egg count was also determined per farm.



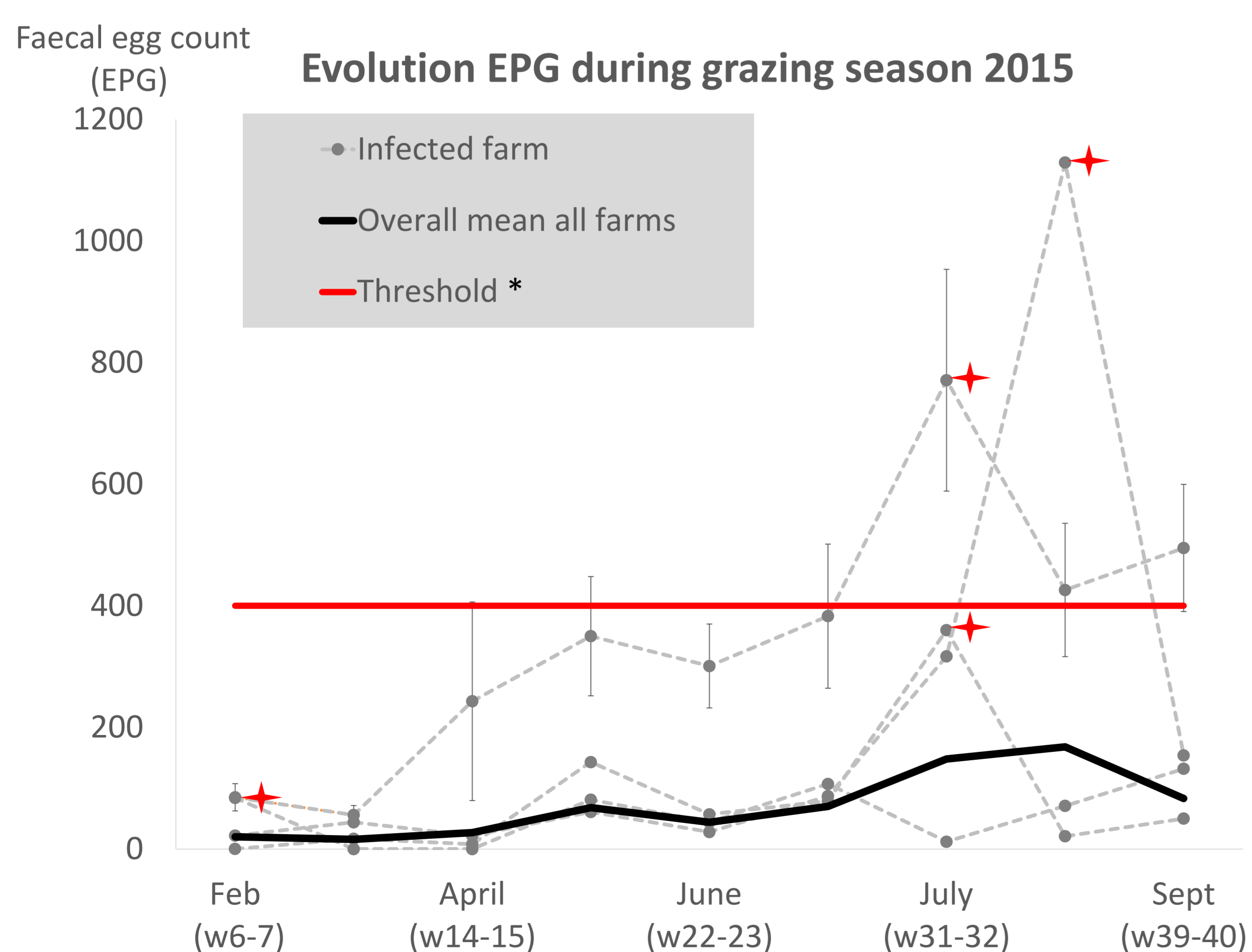
Positive samples were used to start a coproculture. The Baermann technique was used to obtain L3 larvae for identification.



Results and Conclusion

1. Infection levels of gastrointestinal nematodes varied considerably between farms: 40% of the farms did not have any infection, while in the infected farms the mean faecal egg count exceeded 1120 EPG. Pasture and feed management could explain the differences in infection level.

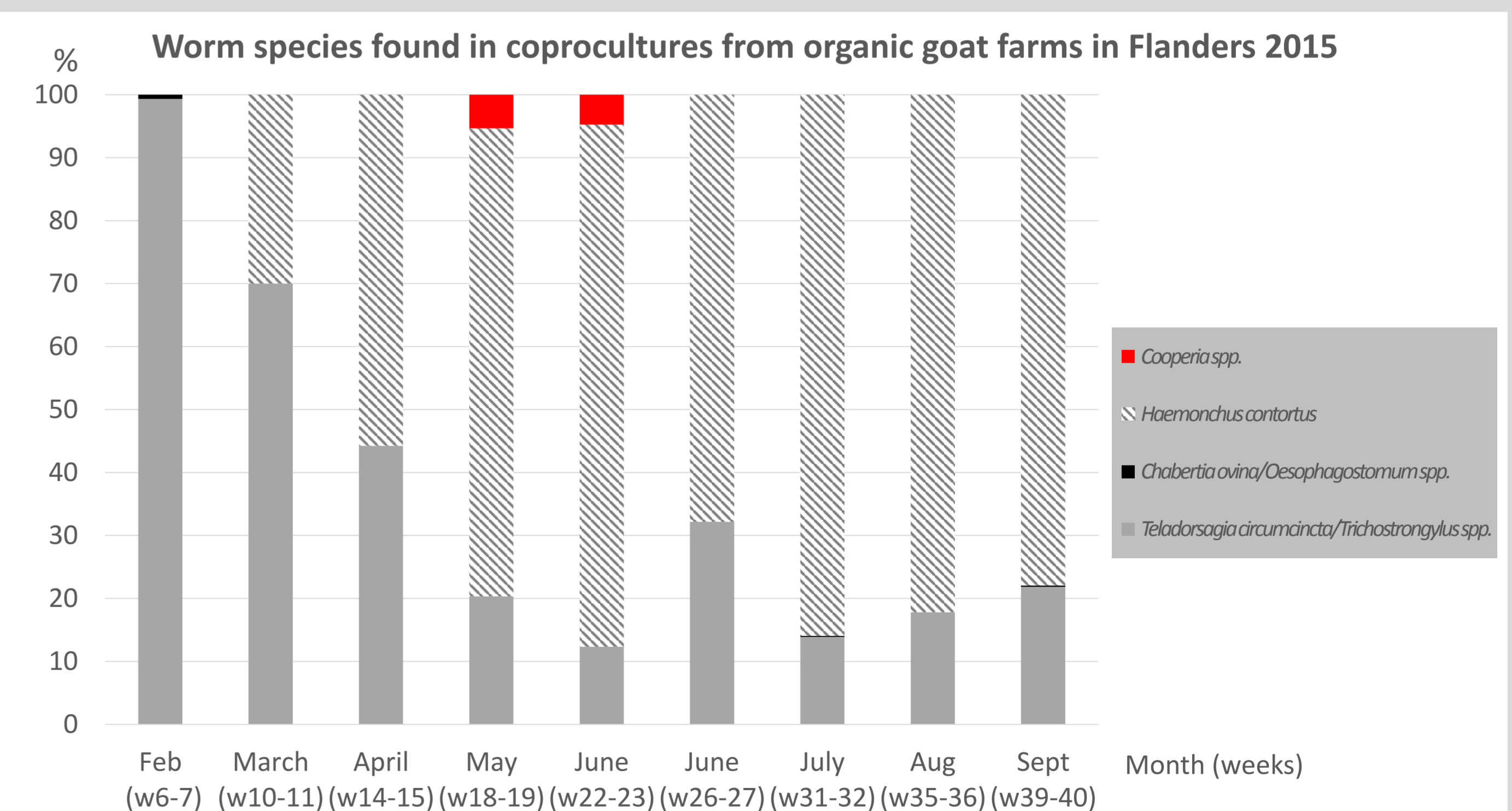
2. The most abundant worm species found during the grazing season of 2015 were *Haemonchus contortus* and *Teladorsagia circumcincta*/*Trichostrongylus* spp.



*Threshold to contact veterinary services, based on literature and expertise from veterinarians on the field

Error bars represent SEM

★ Farm has dewormed



Conclusion

- The dominant worm species found is *Haemonchus contortus*
- Infection levels of gastrointestinal worms in organic dairy goat farms in Flanders are very low: only two out of ten farms exceeded the threshold in July, August and September

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