



Miscellaneous Health Issues

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There are several health issues that sheep producers should be concerned about in addition to those mentioned in the other handouts. These issues include the following:



Soremouth

Soremouth is a highly contagious disease that is caused by a virus. Lambs with the virus develop very sore blisters around their nose and mouth. In addition, the lambs may spread the disease to their mother's teats. Anytime you handle lambs with soremouth, be sure to wash your hands thoroughly so that you do not contract the disease. Soremouth is a disease that normally does not need

treated. Simply allow the disease to run its course. You should watch ewes carefully to be sure they allow lambs to nurse in the event they develop sores on the teats. If the ewe does not allow the lambs to nurse, you may need to treat her teats with an ointment to help the sores heal quicker. If the udder becomes swollen from excess milk, you may also need to relieve the pressure by stripping some of the milk out of the udder. Soremouth generally clears up in two to three weeks. Vaccines are also available for prevention, but must be used with extreme caution to prevent spreading the disease to other lambs or humans.

Overeating Disease

A toxin produced by the bacteria *Clostridium perfringens* causes overeating disease or enterotoxemia. The most prevalent types are C and D. Overeating disease can be prevented by vaccinating young lambs. Often, the overeating disease vaccine includes vaccine for tetanus. Signs of overeating disease include lambs laying on their side paddling with their feet and heads bent over their back. They show signs of abdominal pain and their abdoments will often be very hard and bloated. Death occurs very rapidly. Treatment is often ineffective, so lambs should be vaccinated to prevent the disease from occurring. Vaccination with an antitoxin may treat problem if administered early enough.

Fly Strike

Fly strike is a problem that typically occurs in warm wet weather or hot humid weather. Sheep that have a fair amount of wool or have a lot of manure caked around their rear end are the most susceptible. Fly strike may also occur when the wool stays wet from urine. Fly strike happens when flies lay their eggs in the moist wool or the manure. The eggs hatch and the larvae burrow into the flesh of the sheep. Once the larvae begin burrowing into the flesh it is a relatively short time period before the sheep will go into shock and die. Treating the sheep involves first shearing the wool away from the wound and then treating with a fly repellent that will also kill the larvae. A pour-on product works well because it lasts for several days to several weeks. Signs of fly strike include tail twitching, stomping and a tendency to stand off from the flock.

White Muscle Disease

White Muscle Disease or stiff lamb disease is caused by a deficiency of selenium, vitamin E or both. Soils in Pennsylvania are selenium deficient, so livestock producers should supplement mineral mixes or rations with additional selenium or give ewes a selenium injection. It is helpful to also include vitamin E with the injection because selenium and vitamin E work together to prevent the disease. Be cautious when adding selenium to rations or giving an injection, as the window between the requirement and toxic levels is small. Characteristics of the disease include stiffness in the hind legs, an arched back and inability to stand.

Listeriosis

Listeriosis or Circling Disease is caused by a bacteria that is found in high concentrations in moldy feed. The bacteria are found throughout the environment, but typically only cause the disease when sheep eat moldy silage or hay. Listeriosis causes encephalitis (inflammation of the brain), and signs of the disease include depression and disorientation. Sheep with the disease often will walk in circles. Prevention is simply to feed good quality silage or hay. Treatment is difficult and is not always effective. Typical treatment involves an antibiotic and banamine to reduce fever.

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