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## FALL 2014 SMALL RUMINANT NEWSLETTER



**How do you assess the body condition of these sheep? What does the wool hide?**  
*Photo courtesy of Kathy Pickard*

### **Body Condition is Key**

It is a good idea for producers to assess body condition in their herd or flock periodically to evaluate their nutrition program and the health of their animals. Animals that are identified as being in “poor body condition” (thinner or emaciated) relative to their herd mates should be evaluated to attempt to determine the underlying cause. If, as a producer, you are concerned about the health of your animals, it is a good idea to consult your herd veterinarian.

Some common reasons for small ruminants to suffer poor body condition include:

- Poor herd/flock nutrition
- Poor dentition (especially molars)
- Chronic parasitism

- Pregnancy (multiple fetuses)
- Caseous lymphadenitis (CLA)
- Maedi-visna
- Johne's Disease (paratuberculosis)
- Scrapie

## **Nutrition**

It is important to work with a small ruminant nutritionist to help balance available feedstuffs to meet energy demands, protein requirements and vitamins/minerals. Sample of forages and concentrates will be tested and rations will be balanced. If poor body condition appears to be a herd/flock problem, it may be a good idea to talk to a nutritionist and evaluate your ration.

## **Poor Dentition**

Excessive wear of premolars and molar teeth can lead to difficulty in chewing fibrous foods. This is a major cause of weight loss and poor condition in older sheep and goats. Producers may notice older animals dropping large wads of chewed feed, may see feed impaction in the cheeks or see swelling due to overgrown or displaced molars. There is no effective treatment for poor dentition, and affected animals should be culled.

## **Caseous Lymphadenitis (CLA)**

This is a chronic, contagious disease affecting sheep and goats. It is spread between animals in close confinement or indirectly through use of shearing equipment. There are 2 forms of the disease:

- 1) SUPERFICIAL –there is inflammation of surface lymph nodes, especially seen toward the back of the jaw. Infected lymph nodes have an onion-ring appearance and contain yellow-green pus
- 2) VISCERAL –this form occurs when there is spread of the disease to deeper lymph nodes or internal organs. It is commonly associated with “thin ewe syndrome.” Affected animals perform poorly and often carcasses are condemned at slaughter.

To diagnosis this disease it is possible to culture draining lymph nodes.

Treatment for CLA is unrewarding. It is important to remember NOT to lance/open swollen lymph nodes- this only makes it easier to spread disease to other animals. Instead, try to maintain effective biosecurity: Properly disinfect shearing equipment and handling facilities, inspect and quarantine all new arrivals for at least 2 months, cull affected animals when possible and vaccinate to help prevent new infections. Talk to your veterinarian about the benefits of vaccinating against CLA if you believe your herd or flock has infected animals.

## **Johne's Disease**

This disease causes emaciation and death in sheep and goats. Kids and lambs are typically infected early in life through exposure to contaminated manure (fecal-oral route), however, infection can also be passed from the dam to her offspring in utero. It usually takes 3-4 years before infected animals start to show symptoms. These include:

- Chronic weight loss, poor fleece or hair coat
- Bright and alert but may be weak
- NO diarrhea (unlike in cattle)

- Normal appetite
- May see bottle jaw if cases are advanced

Blood is tested to diagnosis this disease. There is no cure for Johne's Disease. It is important to cull affected animals to reduce the spread of disease in the herd/flock and also to cull offspring born to infected animals due to risk of disease transfer across the placenta.

### **Maedi-visna (MVV)**

This disease is caused by a virus and can have a large variation in clinical disease. It is typically spread from the dam to her offspring via colostrum and milk. Signs of disease are usually seen in animals 3+ years of age and include respiratory disease (Maedi), nervous disease (Visna), mastitis and arthritis. The main economic effect is due to poor milk production, poor body condition, decreased reproductive efficiency and poor lamb growth rates.

Animals with respiratory disease experience exercise intolerance, increased respiratory rate and effort and wasting. They often remain bright and continue to eat despite weight loss. A large number of affected sheep may also have mastitis (diffuse udder hardening) which significantly decreases milk production. Blood tests are used to diagnose Maedi-visna.

There is no cure for this disease. Effective biosecurity is very important. If possible, producers should attempt to source replacement animals from flocks free of MVV. If a flock is infected, regular testing of blood samples and culling of positive animals and their offspring is critical, although costly.

## **Goat profitability workshops**

Ontario Goat and EastGen have partnered up for a series of goat workshops being held in Stratford and Peterborough in October. The workshops are focused to improving productivity in the herd that will then contribute towards overall profitability. Goat producers have focused on the herd size to attain growth over the past years. As the Goat sector evolves, goat producers are wise to look at the productivity of the herd and how each goat contributes to the profitability of the herd.

At each of the workshops, Ontario Goat will launch - *Best Management Practices for Commercial Goat Production*. This goat best management practices (BMPs) manual is a comprehensive resource designed for goat producers across the meat, milk and fibre sectors that are looking to improve or implement best management practices on their farms.

The BMP manual is an excellent resource for all goat farmers since it covers a lot of production and herd management topics. All producers who attend the workshop will be given the BMP Manual as part of their registration.

### **Speakers will include:**

-EastGen's, *Bruce Poulin* topic is "Effective reproduction management, and all that it entails, can help improve productivity by ultimately providing a year-round supply of meat or milk".

-*Cecelia Curtis*, Ruminant Nutritionist at Floradale Feed Mill Limited, will review management tips associated with transition feeding starting with the dry doe through to early lactation.

-*Dr. Allyson MacDonald*, a veterinarian specializing in goat production will review goat diseases and animal health challenges and their economic impact on the herd.

The workshops will be held on October 22nd at the Stratford Rotary Complex and October 23rd at the Best Western Plus Otonabee Inn in Peterborough. All workshops will be held from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. with lunch provided. Pre-registration is required and the cost to attend is \$20/person. Contact the Ontario Goat office at 1-866-311-6422 to reserve a spot. Ontario Goat represents Ontario's milk, meat and fibre goat farmers with a united voice and is dedicated to enhancing the goat industry through education, collaboration, innovation and strategic alliances. For more information, visit [www.ontariogoat.ca](http://www.ontariogoat.ca).

To learn more about East Gen visit [www.eastgen.ca/goats](http://www.eastgen.ca/goats).

Jolande Oudshoorne with her Huron County 4-H Lamb sold at Brussels, Thanksgiving weekend.

