



Herd Health Issues for Goat Farms

New York State Sheep/Goat Health Assurance Program

Biosecurity - Is implementing management to protect your herd against disease from entering through purchased animals, equipment, feed, etc. and minimizing any spread of disease within a herd if it does enter your herd.

Parasites - pose a significant threat to the health of small ruminants. Parasites can damage the gastrointestinal tract and result in reduced reproductive performance, reduced growth rates, less productive animals in terms of meat, fiber and milk and even death. Young animals and lactating does and those in late gestation are the most susceptible. Pasture management, targeted deworming and herd monitoring is needed to manage herds for parasites.

Clostridial - bacteria are normally found in the soil and are a part of normal microflora in the GI tract of healthy goats. Under specific conditions such as excessive consumption of milk or feed, heavy parasite loads, other diseases, these bacteria can rapidly reproduce in the animal's intestine, producing large quantities of toxins. This leads to Enterotoxemia - loss of appetite, bloody scours and possibly sudden death. Tetanus is another Clostridial in soil that enters through broken skin causing rigidity (lockjaw). There are effective

vaccines that are commercially available to prevent Enterotoxemia and Tetanus.

Soremouth - is caused by a Pox virus that requires a break in the skin to enter the body. It is contagious to humans which can cause painful and contagious lesions on the skin, very often on the hands or fingers. Care should be taken when handling animals with soremouth. Once soremouth is introduced to a farm, either from vaccination or other means, it usually returns yearly to susceptible animals.



Foot Health - Footrot is a bacterial infection prevalent in warm, moist areas causing infection of the horny tissue of the sole that protects the fleshy tissue of the foot. Foot scald infects only the area between the toes and often clears up quickly with treatment or with improving environmental conditions.

CL - Caseous Lymphadenitis is caused by the bacteria *Corynebacterium pseudotuberculosis* which causes abscesses in the lymph nodes and internal organs.



Affected animals are often culled early. The disease is spread by direct contact with an infected animal or through





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contaminated equipment or a contaminated environment.

Respiratory - Respiratory infections, or pneumonia, are a common and serious disease in goats caused by a number of different types of pneumonia complexes. Many times, a combination of viral and bacterial agents infect the lungs as a result of stress, such as weaning, transport, change of weather, poor air quality (high ammonia in confinement or dusty conditions), or a combination of factors.

CAE - Caprine arthritis encephalitis is a viral disease of goats that is caused by a virus which causes multisystem infections



- arthritis, pneumonia, mastitis, weight loss and encephalitis.

Many infected goats are carriers and

remain asymptomatic which can allow the virus to remain in a herd undetected.

The major route of transmission is consumption of virus-infected colostrum or milk from infected does.

Abortion refers to a female losing her offspring during pregnancy or giving birth to weak or deformed babies. Abortions can be due to infectious or non-infectious agents. The main infectious agents that cause abortion in

sheep and goats are *Vibriosis*, *Chlamydia*, *Toxoplasmosis*, and *Leptospirosis*. *Care should be taken when handling aborted fetuses or placentas, as all the agents that cause abortion in goats can be transmitted to humans.*

Scrapie - is a fatal, degenerative disease affecting the central nervous system of sheep and goats. It is related to BSE (mad cow) and CWD (Chronic Wasting disease in deer).



USDA is working on eradicating this disease from the US.

Johne's disease is a contagious, chronic infection that affects primarily the small intestines of ruminants. Over time the infection causes thickening of the intestines lessening their ability to absorb nutrients. Affected animals continue to eat but lose weight and "waste away". A high percentage of animals remain subclinical but pass the Johne's in their manure contaminating the environment spreading the infection. There is no treatment or cure for Johne's. Management to prevent infections is the key to controlling this disease in herds.



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