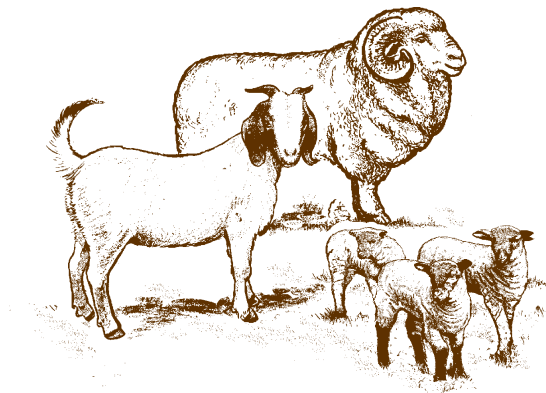




DEPARTMENT: AGRICULTURE

Common and important diseases of sheep and goats



J.A. Turton

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Animal Health for Developing Farmers
ARC–Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute
Private Bag X05, Onderstepoort 0110
Tel. (012) 529 9158

**Some diseases occur in both sheep and goats,
while others occur in one or the other**

**It is important to observe your animals daily so
that you can notice any changes in their health**

Diseases affecting the head and mouth

Orf

- Orf, which is also called vuilbek, is caused by a virus
- It mostly affects young animals. Blisters occur, which then burst and form thick scabs. The sores can be infected by bacteria, which make the animal even sicker.
- This disease can occur when too many animals are kept together, or as a result of damage caused by thorns and other sharp objects in feed, ticks and lice.
- Treatment involves the use of locally applied antibiotics (wound powder). Nursing is also important. Keep lambs warm, and give them feed and water.



- Prevention involves good management practices and vaccination. Prevent conditions that can lead to the disease. A vaccine is available and could be used where the disease is important.

Bluetongue

- Bluetongue, also called *bloutong*, is more important in sheep.
- It is caused by a virus.
- It can occur when animals are not vaccinated and are permitted to graze near water when there are a lot of midges. It is spread by these small biting insects, and is therefore more common in late summer.
- In affected animals there is swelling of the head and lips. The disease is called bluetongue because the tongue can appear blue. The eyes are closed because they are sensitive to the sun. Affected animals do not want to walk because their feet are sore. Sometimes they can die suddenly.
- Treatment involves nursing: keep the animals out of the sun and give them water and feed.
- Prevention involves good management and vaccination. Stable animals in the late afternoon where possible, and do not let them graze in the areas where midges such as vleis are present. Vaccination requires 3 vaccinations, 4 weeks apart, before the late summer.



Plant poisonings

- There are many different toxic plants, which can cause very different signs in animals. Some of them can cause skin signs, and the animal will appear sunburnt, particularly around the face, will lose wool or hair, and will get crusty sores around the affected areas.



Boetebossie

Diseases affecting the feet and legs

Foot abscesses and foot rot

- Foot abscesses and footrot can be caused by:
 - bacteria
 - fungi
 - poor management such as poor hoofcare, overgrown hooves, ticks between the claws
- The animal will appear lame in one or more legs, and there may be swollen joints, an abscess above the claw, redness between the claws, swelling and redness around the hooves.
- Treatment involves cleaning the hooves, antibiotics and disinfectants.

- Prevention involves hoof care, footbaths, tick control, and dry housing.

Arthritis

- Arthritis, which is infection of the joints, occurs when bacteria (germs) get into the joints. This can be because of an infection through the blood (especially in young animals because of infection of the navel) or because of sores from tick or wire damage affecting the joints.
- The affected joint is often swollen.
- Often the animal will be lame.
- Sometimes the skin will rupture, and fluid will come out of the affected joint.
- Treatment involves antibiotics and keeping the area clean.
- Prevention involves good management, particularly hygiene.

Diseases affecting the skin

Sheep-scab

- Mites are little parasites that can be difficult to see with your naked eye. There are a number of different mites, but the most important one in sheep causes sheep-scab. Infected sheep can spread the disease to other

sheep, particularly if they are in a poor condition and during winter.

- The signs noted are severe itching, wool or hair loss, and crustiness of the skin. Often wool is noted in the mouth of sheep because they bite at the affected area, or on fences because they rub themselves.
- This is a notifiable disease, and if you suspect it you should contact your animal health technician or state veterinarian.
- It can be treated with registered dips or Ivomec.
- Prevention involves dipping new animals and quarantine.

Lice infestation

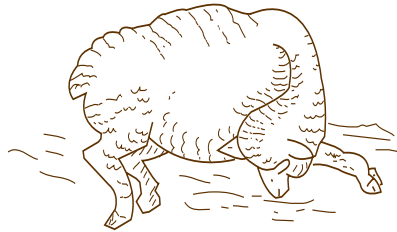
- Lice can also cause itching and loss of hair and wool.
- They are a problem when animals are in a poor condition or during winter.
- Treatment involves the use of a registered dip.
- Prevent lice by ensuring healthy, strong animals. Treat all new animals before introducing them to the herd or flock.

Tick damage

- Ticks can cause severe damage to sheep and goats, particularly around the udder and ears. The wounds will often get infected with bacteria, and might be

attacked by flies. Some ticks cause more damage than others, such as the ones which infect animals with heartwater.

- To treat and prevent ticks you could either use a pour-on, or a plunge dip or spray dip if you have the facilities for this. Plunge dips are usually most practical for small-stock.



Heartwater

- Heartwater is caused by a small parasite that is spread to animals by the bont tick. It can occur in goats and sheep.
- Signs of heartwater are fever, depression and high stepping (walking) leading to convulsions and death.
- At the point of death froth is often noted at the mouth.
- The treatment for heartwater is by means of tetracycline. Read the instructions on the bottle for the dose.
- Prevent the disease in sheep and goats by keeping breeds that are resistant to the disease. Strategic tick control can be of assistance. A vaccine is also available.



Flystrike

- Wounds can be infested with flies, and this is called flystrike.

- Treatment involves cleaning the area, removing maggots and treating with an insecticidal cream or powder.
- Flies can be controlled by good kraal hygiene. Skin wounds should be treated to prevent strike does from occurring.



Abscesses

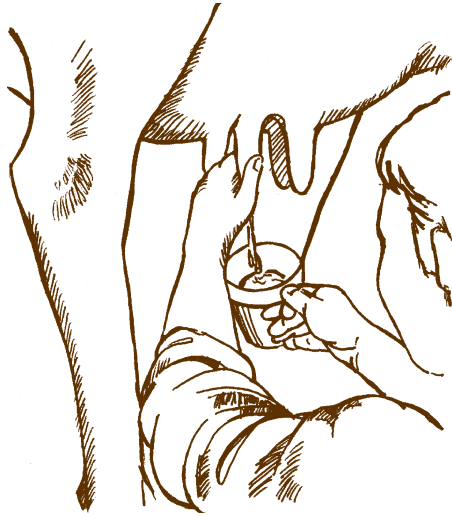
- Abscesses are caused by bacteria. Wounds from sharp objects around kraals, ticks, thorns and cuts when shearing can result in abscesses.
- The signs seen are a large swelling with white to yellow contents, poor growth and weight loss.
- Treatment can involve opening up and cleaning the abscess. Antibiotics may be necessary.
- Prevention is through good hygiene and cleaning the wounds.

Diseases affecting the udder

Mastitis

- Mastitis is an infection of the udder and is caused by a bacterium.

- It is most likely to occur in dirty, overcrowded conditions.
- The affected udder is red or blue to black, warm and painful. The milk is watery and may contain clots. The animal may become very sick and die.
- Treatment involves the use of antibiotics and you need to strip the milk out of the udder.
- Prevention involves a hygienic environment. Vaccination is possible for some bacteria.



Gut diseases

Worms

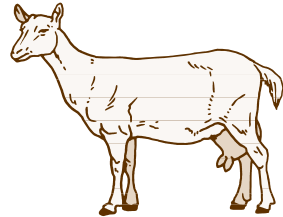
- There are many types of worms that can affect sheep and goats. The most important type is wireworms.
- Worms are more likely to be a problem in the case of an ineffective deworming programme, intensive systems, wet weather and planted pastures.
- The signs seen are often bottlejaw and paleness of the eyelids and gums. Sometimes diarrhoea is also noted.

- Weight loss, loss of appetite and death can occur.
- The treatment and prevention is by deworming. The type of dewormer used will depend on the type of worm involved and this differs in different parts of the country.



Redgut

- Redgut, which is also known as *rooiderm* and enterotoxaemia, is caused by a bacteria.
- It is particularly likely to occur under conditions of stress or overfeeding on grains or lush pasture.
- The signs seen are usually sudden death and there is usually no time to treat the animals.
- When you open the dead animal you may notice that the gut is red and contains gas.
- If signs are seen early, you can treat with antibiotics.
- Prevention involves vaccination, guarding against overfeeding and eliminating stress.



Coccidiosis

- Coccidiosis is caused by a small parasite and is most common in goats. It occurs mainly in young animals,

where there is overcrowding and under wet, cold weather conditions.

- It can result in severe bloody diarrhea, weight loss and death.
- Treatment involves anticoccidial drugs and the provision of water with electrolytes to replace the fluid lost.
- Prevention involves good management. Avoid overcrowding, plan feed management, and practise good kraal management. You can use feed additives if you are following a feedlot system to raise lambs for slaughter.

Diseases affecting the respiratory system

Pneumonia

- Pneumonia can be caused by bacteria, viruses or milk or dewormer getting into the lungs.
- It is more likely to be a problem with poor management, which includes overcrowding, dust, faecal buildup in kraals, poor nutrition and cold conditions.
- The signs seen are coughing, nasal discharge, difficulty in breathing, loss of condition, and sometimes death.

- When you cut open an animal which has died you may notice redness of the lungs and different colours and areas within the lungs.
- Treatment involves the use of antibiotics and nursing.
- Prevention is by management, which includes providing shelter in cold weather, good nutrition (especially vitamins), reducing dust, clean kraals and avoiding overcrowding.

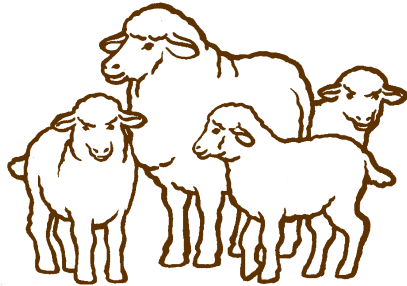
Diseases causing paralysis

Botulism

- Botulism is caused by a bacterium.
- It is most likely to occur when there is poor-quality feed or feed containing dead animals or poultry litter.
- The signs seen are paralysis. Often the tongue is outside the mouth because of paralysis.
- The animal will lie down, often with the head turned to the side.
- The paralysis progressively worsens, and then the animal dies.
- Treatment involves nursing. An antitoxin can be effective if used in the early stages.
- Prevention is by vaccination and the provision of good-quality feed, particularly during the dry period, as well as phosphorus supplementation in licks.

Tetanus

- Tetanus is caused by a bacterium. It is most likely to occur with poor management such as not disinfecting wounds and poor hygiene when performing castration or tail docking.
- The signs seen are paralysed and stiff animals. Muscle tremors are observed. The animal usually dies within 3 to 4 days.
- Treatment involves nursing. Antibiotics can be effective if used in the early stages of disease.
- Prevention is by vaccination. Management is also important, which includes good hygiene, disinfection of wounds and treatment of wounds with wound powder and antibiotics.



Abortions

- Abortions can be caused by many factors, including bacteria and viruses.
- Management factors which can also result in abortion can include some vaccinations used in pregnant animals, certain deworming drugs used in the first part of pregnancy or stressful procedures such as rough handling.

- The kid or lamb is passed before it is ready to be born, or is stillborn after the usual term of pregnancy.
- Prevention can include vaccination and good management such as planning vaccination and deworming strategies.

Metabolic diseases

Metabolic diseases are usually seen during the last part of pregnancy or in the early part of lactation when the ewe is nursing the lamb. Animals should be treated by a veterinarian to prevent deaths.

Milk fever

- The cause of milk fever is a low calcium content in the blood. It is more frequent in late-pregnant (older or lactating animals which are feeding twins and when animals are grazing on rich green pastures).
- The signs seen are muscle tremors, weakness, depression, lying down, and a rapid pulse.
- Treatment involves giving calcium in the vein.
- Prevention involves nutritional management and close observation.

Ketosis

- Ketosis is caused by an imbalance of energy. It is more likely to occur when there is poor-quality feed

during the last part of pregnancy, in overfat females, and when stressful procedures are performed during late pregnancy.

- The signs are lying down, headpressing, not eating.
- Treatment must be done by a veterinarian.
- Prevention involves planning the breeding season and nutritional management.

CONCLUSION

- Prevention is always better than cure! Many of these diseases can be prevented by good management of livestock, which includes hygiene, nutritional management and vaccination against some diseases.
- By recognising the important diseases in your area you can know best how to prevent and treat them.

**For further information contact
your animal health technician, state/private veterinarian**

or

***Animal Health for Developing Farmers*
ARC–Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute
Private Bag X05, Onderstepoort 0110
Tel (012) 529 9158**

or

**Resource Centre, Department of Agriculture
Tel (012) 319 7141/7085**