

Good management prevents sheep problems



Dr. Gary Brubaker, professor of animal science at Delaware Valley College, shows the proper way to make an inter-muscular injection in a sheep. He spoke at a recent sheep seminar held at the college.

By KENDACE BORRY
DOYLESTOWN — Most health problems in sheep can be prevented largely through good management, proper feeding, strict sanitation, and a vaccination program. That's the word according to Dr. Gary Brubaker, professor of animal science at Delaware Valley College. He was a speaker at the recent sheep conference held at that college.

A disease is any deviation in the normal bodily functions of an animal, Brubaker explained. An infectious disease is one that is caused by microbes, such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, spores, etc. Contagious diseases are spread by microbes rapidly from individual to individual. A noninfectious disease is a nutritional or metabolic disorder, and no microbes are involved.

Some normal physiological values for sheep include a rectal temperature averaging 102.3; ranging from 100.9 to 103.8; pulse rate per minute ranges from 70 to 80 beats per minute; and respiration rate averages 12 to 20 per minute.

A good sheep health program is for the most part a preventative program, Brubaker stressed. He told of some general management practices for the prevention of disease.

Proper facilities "build out" disease problems and build in sanitation, he noted. The facility should be designed for easy cleaning, good ventilation, proper drainage, pure water and

uncontaminated feed, isolation areas, and pasture rotation, among other things.

A good shepherd should avoid stress in his flock. Stress lowers disease resistance. Some non-specific stresses include transportation, overcrowding, drastic feeding changes, excessive noise and handling, poor ventilation, adverse weather conditions, and internal parasites.

Visitors should be limited, he added, new animals should be quarantined. Foot dips should be used. And the sheep facility should be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly at least once a year.

A shepherd should learn to know his animals by observing them as frequently as possible, Brubaker said. He should follow a good external and internal parasite control program. Proper nutrition, should be provided, and the animals should be acclimated to the various stages in sheep feeding.

A shepherd should outline a disease preventive program that will fit the needs of the flock. A suggested program, he added, might include a vaccination program for Enterotoxemia, Sore mouth, and Tetanus.

Enterotoxemia is also known as overeating disease, bloody scours, pulpy kidney disease, or apoplexy.

The disease is caused by the toxin produced from Clostridium perfringens, type C and D, which are

normal bacteria of the small intestine.

Symptoms will usually occur in young vigorous large-sized lambs, suckling as well as feeder lambs. They will be seen to be shivering, giving nervous symptoms (such as head drawn back, convulsion, grinding teeth, frothing at the mouth, or comatose). There may be bloody diarrhea, a general sluggishness, with the animal going off feed, and sudden death.

For prevention, the ewes should be vaccinated twice during pregnancy, eight and four weeks before lambing. Lambs should be vaccinated at 30 and 60 days.

Some important predisposing factors for the disease, Brubaker noted, are a sudden change in feed, or irregular feeding; excessive high energy and insufficient feeder space, and feeding various sized lambs together.

Using management as a prevention for the disease, one should have gradual feed changes, be sure the sheep are free of internal parasites, have ample feed in front of the lambs at all times, and use antibiotics in the feed (10 mg per pound of feed).

The disease Sore mouth is also known as ovine ecthyma, contagious ecthyma, proliferative dermatitis, scabby mouth, and contagious pustular dermatitis.

To prevent it, the ewes should be vaccinated prior to breeding, and lambs should be vaccinated around docking time.

This vaccine includes a live virus which is rehydrated. To apply it, one scarifies the area about the size of a quarter on the inside of the flank and applies one drop of the virus solution, brushing it in.

Tetanus, also known as lockjaw, is caused by a toxin produced by an anerobic organism that is commonly found in soil and horse manure. The spores live for years and can be a continuing disease on some premises. The organism

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