

Livestock Notes

Controlling Urinary Calculi (Water Belly) In Lambs

Some minerals in sheep rations can result in reduced production and even death if provided in incorrect amounts. This is particularly true when we get careless with the correct levels and balance of calcium and phosphorous in the feed.

Calcium is one of those major minerals that can cause real problems in lamb finishing rations if given at insufficient levels or if not balanced with its counterpart, phosphorous. These mistakes can lead to urinary calculi problems (water belly) especially with castrated male lambs.

Ideally, any lamb finishing ration needs to contain twice as much calcium as phosphorous. Another approach to safeguard against water belly is to add two percent feed-grade limestone to all high grain rations. Free-choicing some high quality alfalfa hay; providing a good source of fresh, frost-free water; and giving additional salt-free choice also have been found beneficial in preventing this nutritional disease.

Ammonium sulfate can also be added to the complete ration at 10 to 20 pounds per ton, or you may choose to add ammonium chloride at 5 to 10 pounds per ton as a preventive measure. It is suggested that you resort to these two additives only when it seems difficult to evaluate the calcium and phosphorus levels in the rations.

Lamb Marketing Major Industry Concern

A panel of experts attending the recent American Sheep Industry (ASI) Convention in Long Beach, Calif., consisted of a packer, lamb feeder, marketing specialist, cattleman, and an economist. Their assignment was to discuss and suggest ways the industry could end the current depressed lamb market.

Roy Meek, lamb feeder and market specialist, warned producers that lack of product consistency continues to haunt the marketing arena. We've simply got to change our marketing system so we can sell and get paid on grade and yield rather than dressing percent, he said, adding that overfed lambs are the result of marketing lambs on an antiquated system. The consumer is demanding a lean product and we insist on selling a fatter one.

Colorado lamb feeder Richard Drake told the wall-to-wall crowd that producers need to learn more about the industry in order to make marketing more efficient. You have to know your industry, know your product, and define your markets if you are going to sell it properly, he said. Drake also said that all lambs reach the feedlot between mid-August and mid-November. This means that approximately 2.3 to 2.4 million lambs arrive to the feeders, during that three-month time period. Some way we've got to stretch it out, he said.

The lamb industry is continually going up against its more organized, better informed red meat competition, said packer Phil Cohn of Ellensburg, Wash. He pointed out that the current marketing system is not working for lamb and warned producers that it's time for decision making. Cohn said lamb supply and demand do not balance out, so producers need to figure out a way to have lamb distributed to grocery stores more evenly throughout the year. He believes the farm flock state sheep producers are in a better position to make these adjustments than the larger range sheep operations, but he said lack of organization and commitment seems to curtail this effort.

Cohn suggested the lamb marketing industry, like the other red meat industries, needs to continually re-examine what the consumer wants and start doing things to produce a product that meets those needs. We must remember the show ring enthusiasts do not have the answers, and if what they have contributed to productivity over the last 20 years is an indication, we might just as well write off the sheep industry right now. He added, we have to be able to stand up to the industry and say this is right and this is wrong.

Indiana cattleman Sam Washburn said niche marketing may be the key. He advised sheep producers to concentrate on the special benefits of lamb. Capitalize on your strengths, he said. Lamb is a specialty product. Don't apologize for it. Capitalize on it.

Swine TB Field Study Confirms Meat Inspector Accuracy

A recent study of swine tuberculosis in Pennsylvania shows that about three-fourths of the hog carcasses identified by inspectors as having swine TB were, in fact, positively infected.

The Penn State study also showed that most TB infections are associated with birds or sawdust.

Swine tuberculosis does not exhibit clinical signs in pigs (and appears to have no effect on humans), but the disease often causes considerable economic loss to producers. Carcasses with multiple TB lesions in the lymph nodes must be either "Passed for Cooking" (PFC) or condemned. Producers lose money on these pigs.

The organism that causes most swine TB is Mycobacterium avium. Several serotypes exist for this organism, but the four most often implicated are serotypes 1, 2, 4, and 8. Serotypes 1 and 2 are typically associated with wild birds and poultry, while serotypes 4 and 8 are associated with bedding, especially sawdust and wood shavings.

The best way to diagnose the disease is to culture the organism

from infected lymph nodes. Unfortunately, growing the organism under laboratory conditions takes weeks. Inspectors at packing plants look for lesions in the lymph nodes of the carcass to identify TB. If the inspector finds one infected node in two regions, or several in one region, he labels the carcass PFC. That means the packer must cook the carcass at 170 degrees F for 30 minutes before he can sell the meat. If the inspector discovers numerous infected nodes in two or more regions, the carcass must be "tanked," and cannot be used for human consumption. Producers usually receive \$2.00 for a tanked carcass.

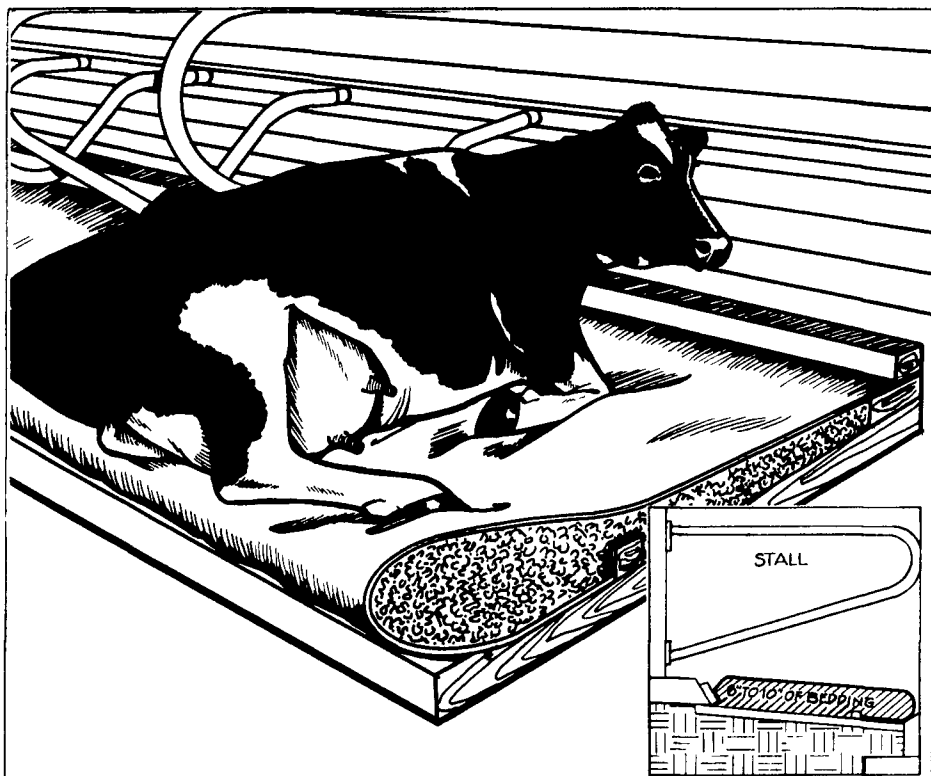
The study hoped to get a better understanding of the disease by identifying the source of the organism. This was done by making selected farm visits to herds in which infection had been confirmed by bacterial culture or microscopic examination of suspicious lymph nodes taken at slaughter. The results of the study are shown below.

SWINE TB FIELD STUDY RESULTS

Lymph nodes tested:	125
Number of positive lymph nodes:	
Microscopic exam:	105
Bacterial culture:	92 (74%)
Stain:	15
Number of serotypes:	
1 & 2 (birds).....	33
4 & 8 (sawdust).....	35
All others and undetermined.....	57

It appears that most of the lymph nodes inspectors identify as positive are infected with mycobacteria. (Previous studies have shown that only about half of the suspicious lymph nodes are actually positive.) Microscopic examination can help to confirm the pre-

sence of infection, but in our study staining was not a reliable method. Based on the data shown above and the surveys taken during farm visits, we also conclude that most swine TB infections can be associated with either birds or sawdust.



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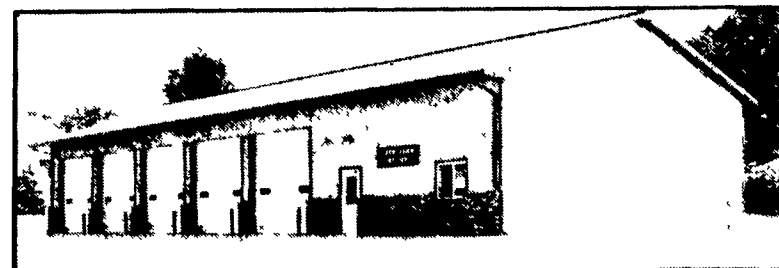
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