

Spring Sheep And Goat Thoughts

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NARVON (Lancaster Co.) — The flock and/or herd has weathered the winter, hopefully provided a crop of lambs and kids, either in the fall or early winter, and is ready for a change of pace.

At least the shepherds and goat herders are ready for that change. Shoveling paths for the animals is not high on the list of our favorite things and this winter we certainly had to do at least some of that.

Spring is here though, and after the winter we've had, it is welcome. However, it brings with it a set of activities for the shepherds among us. First and foremost for sheep owners is getting on a list for sheep shearing. Sheep shearers are in short supply and you should get yours lined up early.

Mid-March is an ideal time to start getting those gals shorn, especially if you are aiming for an early breeding program. Certainly try to get it done before the weather gets really warm. Then it is hard on both the shearer and the sheep.

Along with shearing should come a worming schedule. Through the cold weather, internal parasites are relatively dormant. But once warmer weather comes, those worms are on the move.

There is significant controversy about which wormers, how often, the same wormer all the time or alternating wormers. These are good questions to ask your veterinarian the next time you talk to him/her.

If you've only had sheep or goats for a short time and have acres of pasture, internal parasites may not be a big concern, but if you've had either for years and have limited pasture, parasites will be a problem.

There are several types of worming medications so it may be important to know which parasites are most prevalent in your flock or herd. Collecting representative samples of manure and having the vet do fecal egg counts will give you information about which dewormer will work best on your group of animals.

As you determine a worming schedule be sure to include a wormer for tape worm sometime late in May or early in June, particularly for your young animals. Feeding tape worms is an expensive and nonproductive proposition.

One family of wormers, Ivermectin and Zimectin will treat external as well as internal parasites. Safeguard/Panacur and Valbazen are effective against tape. Valbazen should not be used on pregnant animals or just prior to breeding.

Some breeders report that its use will interfere

with breeding for one or two cycles. It is important when treating animals to use sufficient amounts of wormer to accomplish your goal.

Under dosing will diminish the effectiveness of the wormer and eventually the animals will build up

(Turn to Page 17)



Goats metabolize most medicines differently than sheep and often require higher doses.