



December 2011

President's Message

At our last AGM, held on the 26th of November 2011, we discussed a wide range of topics, including how the landscape for sheep production in the near future. As you are aware, there are several challenges facing us as an organization sponsoring an annual sale.

One relates to bio-security. As you are all aware, we have been using wooden gates for fabrication of pens for animal holding and gates for animal movement at our annual sale. These gates have also been loaned to the NS Provincial Exhibition for the sheep and goat shows, researchers at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College as well as to Nova Scotia 4-H for the Provincial Show (when held in Bible Hill).

Two issues arise from these uses. The first is that they wear-out, break and weather, creating a need to replace them on a regular basis. The life span appears to be about 5 years. The second and perhaps more pressing issue is that gates used for a variety of purposes and different animals pose a potential problem regarding cleaning and disinfection between uses. As you are aware, wooden gates are difficult to wash and disinfect a very time intensive process. Yet, in order to ensure that there is no possibility of disease transmission between uses, it will be necessary to do this between uses.

If you had an opportunity to attend our September sale, you would have seen light-weight galvanized gates, provided by Art Perry. These were used to pen the rams. Although slightly smaller than the wooden ones, they served the purpose and contained all the animals effectively. At the AGM a motion was made and passed (unanimously) to use the funds we have had in our GIC to procure those and additional gates of that, or similar construction. We had investigated price and availability of gates this summer and found that Art's were the most cost-effective option at this time. We will be purchasing a number of gates at this time, and will have them available for the All Canada Sheep Classic. This conversion from wood to metal will take some time, but, ultimately will help us meet the higher bio-security standards anticipated in the future.

The second change coming our way, as an association, is the implementation of the use of RFID tags for sheep. Although the date for mandatory use of these tags has been pushed back, slightly, it will ultimately bring a new requirement for tracking sheep movement and (co)-mixing. This will mean that not only will we have to record all tags for sheep coming in, but will, eventually also have to provide tracking lists to the CFIA in a timely manner.

The specifics of that requirement have not been fully outlined, but would, in all likelihood require some form of electronic return. This will mean that we may have to consider the purchase of a Tag Reader, and if available, appropriate software for generating a suitable report. If we proceed down this road, it would make sense to further investigate if there is software available to allow for merging that with commercial software for invoice/ manifest generation etc. Wade Sanford (VP PSBANS) has been tracking these developments and done preliminary investigation of both types products that might serve our future needs as well as assistance that might be available to meet such requirements. He will advise us as requirements are firmed up.



There is no immediate need for these items (eg. Classic), but it is best that we all be aware that this additional factor may come into play when we sponsor or run sales in the future.

Finally, as you may have heard, our Secretary, Rosemary Wort has undergone serious surgery in November. On behalf of all Association members, we wish her a speedy recovery (and I warn all that she will be pressing and persistent for returns for the new Breeders Directory).

Wishing all the best in this lambing season.

Andrew Hebda

FLOCK HEALTH TIPS

Portions of these flock health tips are abstracted from “Wools and Wattles”, the newsletter of the American Association of Small Ruminant Practitioners, by Dr. Ted Semple, Maritime Genetics.

THE ‘NEW’ CIDR IN CANADA

Veramix® sponges were the ovine reproductive tool of the past. They have been replaced by the CIDR (Easy-Breed, Pfizer) for both sheep and goats. This is a progesterone-impregnated vaginal insert. While in the vagina it releases progesterone. This hormone prevents estrus (heat). The CIDR mimics progesterone release by the corpus luteum (CL) of the ovary. CL regression and progesterone removal removes the progesterone ‘block’ on estrus and the ewe or doe comes into heat several days later. Out of season the hormone PMSG must be used with the CIDR to stimulate follicles to develop and release oocytes (eggs). In season a CIDR has been used alone but a better response is obtained with PMSG. The CIDR is used to synchronize estrus in and out of season.

The US label is confusing – 5 days only – and very unhelpful for Canadian protocols. In Canada, for sheep, we recommend CIDR removal after 14 days with a PMSG injection at CIDR removal. The PMSG dosage out of season is higher than in season. Highly prolific breeds need a smaller dose of PMSG – around 300 IU. Consult your flock veterinarian. Too large a dose of PMSG can result in triplets or quads or even higher numbers.

In goats, the CIDR is left in for 18 days (goats have a longer estrous cycle than sheep). This can be shortened to 12 days if prostaglandin is given 2 days before CIDR removal. If using AI, breeding is 48 hours after CIDR removal and the PMSG injection.

HAEMONCHUS CONTORTUS

How do you recognize it?

Haemonchus contortus, the barber pole worm, lives in the abomasum, the fourth stomach, and takes a blood meal. It is the most economically significant internal parasite of sheep and goats worldwide. Most internal gastrointestinal parasites cause diarrhea – the signs are obvious – a



soiled rear end. *Haemonchus contortus* however does not cause diarrhea. The most obvious signs are anemia with pale mucous membranes, bottle jaw and listlessness. The best site to check for anemia is the conjunctiva, the mucous membranes of the eye. You should routinely check the conjunctiva every time you handle sheep at pasture. Selective parasite treatment means worming only those that are obviously anemic. Training by your veterinarian in distinguishing anemia can be an important part of your flock health program.

This pasture season has been extremely wet. *Haemonchus contortus* eggs shed in feces of infected animals must develop on the ground to the infective larval stage. Wet humid weather favours the rapid maturation of these eggs and the prolonged survival of infective larvae on pasture. Dry conditions kill. This year we have seen a significant number of cases, even deaths, due to *H. contortus* in sheep and goats. Young animals the first year at pasture are especially at risk. Adult animals often succumb to heavy numbers when immunity is low – at the time of giving birth and for several months thereafter. A relatively small number of parasites in the abomasums can take enough blood to kill a young lamb or kid in a few weeks.

SELENIUM – WHY CARE?

The soil of the entire eastern seaboard is selenium deficient. This means our pastures and crops are low in selenium.

So, who cares?

The obvious outcome of a selenium deficiency is white muscle disease. This weakens skeletal and heart muscle. Death in young animals can result at birth and shortly there after, and when turned out to pasture. Or they may show poor weight gains. We routinely recommend the treatment dose of 0.5 ml. for the newborn lamb or kid. On the recommendation of your flock health veterinarian it can be give subcutaneously (under the skin) although the label indicates intramuscular. 0.25 ml. subcutaneously is the preferred dose for small triplets (under 3 kilograms). We also recommend treatment at pasture turnout at 2.0 ml. per 100 pounds (45 kilograms) subcut. Selenium crosses the placenta from the ewe to the fetus but is not present in milk in any significant amount. By the time of pasture turnout the lamb's or kid's levels have dropped considerably (Wools and Wattles). The above 'booster' can be given at 1 to 2 months of age. Note that this dose refers to the 3 mg/ml strength selenium, not the double strength (DS) or MuSe. We recommend this even if you have been using selenium-fortified mineral sources.

What else you might ask?

More insidiously selenium affects the immune system and fertility. Immune deficient animals are more prone to disease. Injections at birth help enhance the immune function of the newborn. Selenium deficient ewes may have poorer quality colostrum and can be more prone to mastitis. Ewes may not be as fertile, require repeat breeding, and have singles rather than twins. Ram may be subfertile and you may see more returns. We recommend the treatment dose of 2.0 ml. per 100 pounds (45 kg.) to ewes 2 to 3 weeks before the breeding season begins. And do not forget the ram!

Selenium is a cheap preventive!

Selenium is cheap! It is not a drug-promoting, get-rich scheme from your veterinarian. It is probably the cheapest preventive you can use! So why not include timely vitamin E Selenium injections in your flock health program?



2009 US GOAT FLOCK SURVEY (Wools and Wattles)

A survey of almost 2500 goat operations in the USA in 2009 revealed

- 51% did not know what caseous lymphadenitis (CLA) was,
- 44% were not familiar with sore mouth,
- 76% were not familiar with Q fever,
- 75% did not check for anemia (*H. contortus*) at pasture, and
- 59% that allowed visitors had not biosecurity measures.

All the above conditions affect both sheep and goats.

So how's your knowledge? Why not acquaint yourself with these diseases? Why not consider some routine biosecurity measures?

Why not ask as part of your flock health program?

Dr. Ted Semple