

Q/A

Diseases that attack sheep

What are the common diseases that affect Sheep? Lawrence Okot (Karuma).

Dear Lawrence

Many livestock farmers undergo untold suffering when their animals suddenly fall sick and they cannot reach a veterinary officer.

Below are the common conditions and diseases that cause sudden death in sheep and how to handle emergencies in the unlikely absence of a veterinary.

Pneumonia

This is typically an infection in the lungs. The sheep affected by the particular disease is depressed and has a runny nose. It also loses appetite, gets high temperature, coughs and has difficulty in breathing. Treatment for pneumonia is done through giving antibiotics such as Oxytetracycline plus multivitamins.

Sore mouth

This is also referred to as contagious ecthyma, which is caused by a virus. Sheep with this condition are seen to have, pimples around the mouth, udder, eyes, anus and hooves. They can get worse, turn into watery blisters that burst to form crusty wounds and eventually sores. The affected sheep should be isolated and the wounds treated with; anti-

biotics or healing oil.

Worm infestations

Sheep can be devastated by worms. Worms in developmental stage access the internal body parts of the sheep mainly via the mouth.

They can migrate to the lungs, liver and intestines. Since they are parasites, inside the body organs affected, the worms suck blood and

other nutritious items in the body. With this, routine deworming can help relieve the sheep of worms.

Bloat

This is common in sheep that have sudden access to unlimited fresh or grainy feed. It is characterised by build-up of gas in the rumen leading to an inflated abdomen. It can lead to sudden collapse and death if not handled quickly. Such an animal can be relieved of gas by use of; vegetable oil or any other edible oil. Soapy water (not rom powder detergents) can be useful too.

Scours

This is common in lambs. The infection flourishes in dirty pens. The condition can be caused by bacteria, coccidia, worms or even viruses. Intervention involves use of; drugs that reverse diarrhea, fluids and electrolytes to stop water loss.

Over-eating

This is also known as Clostridial disease. It is caused by Clostridial bacteria. These organisms take advantage of sudden changes in quantity and quality of feed in the gut to flourish. The veterinarian will administer anti-toxins plus

other supportive medicines to counter diarrhea.

Pregnancy toxaemia

This is common in pregnant ewes, especially in late pregnancy. It arises from deprivation of the ewe of nutrients, as most at that time are being channelled to the growing lamb in the womb.

Abortions

These can arise from bacterial or chlamydial infections. This disease causing agents are produced in the infected animal and passed on to the uninfected through; milk, urine and faeces. The infection can be treated with antibiotics.

Mange

This is typically a skin infection of several different types of mites. It can be seen on; ears, legs, head, and other skin parts. The affected sheep gets itchy sensations on the skin and will be seen scratching, swelling, with eventual loss of hair on affected part and scabby wounds. Treat with skin ointments containing anti mite agents or by injections with Ivermectin or related drugs.

Ring worms

This is another skin infection arising from fungal organisms. These invade the hair follicles and oil glands of the skin, causing damage. You are advised to consult a veterinarian on treatment options as the condition is stubborn and not easy to handle ordinarily.

Answered by Samuel Ssewagudde, a veterinary doctor working with Genesis East Africa limited.



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Compiled by Christine Katende

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