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The Species Specific Educational Resource Team (SSERT)

A Series for Small-Scale Producers and Hobby Owners

Biosecurity Measures for Meat Goat and Sheep Managers



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Mrs. Wyvette Williams, Kentucky State University Cooperative Extension Program, Graphic Designer; Mr. Mitt Walker, Director of the Alabama Meat Goat and Sheep Commodity Group, Alabama Farmers Federation, Technical Input; Photograph compliments of Kenneth Andries, Ph.D., Animal Science Specialist, Kentucky State University

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Diseases transmitted from goats and sheep to humans pose public health risks. Over half of all disease-causing germs found in people originate from animals, including livestock. Zoonoses (animal to human disease transmission) are of increased importance with regard to traditional livestock farming operations with experienced managers and in the increasing number of small-scale hobby farms and lifestyle sheep and goat operations run by individuals lacking past livestock management experience. The livestock show circuits involving sheep and goat producers and 4-H and FFA exhibitors are also sources of public health concern as well as herd health management risks. Several management steps can minimize the risks of sheep and meat goat zoonoses. Foreign animal diseases are those that are not currently in the U.S.

BIOSECURITY MEASURES

PREVENT

- Avoid buying breeding stock at auction barns.
- Test existing breeding stock and newly purchased animals

for certain diseases such as Caseous Lymphadenitis (CL; sheep and goats), Caprine Arthritis-Encephalitis (CAE; goats) and Chlamydiosis (sheep and goats).

- Test other animals like cattle, llamas, and alpacas when kept with sheep and goats.
- Vaccinate healthy animals to prevent diseases.
- Use a clean needle for each animal when giving shots.
- Restrict access of visitors to barns, pastures, and lambing/kidding pens.
- Use disposable shoe covers and coats for farm visitors.
- Minimize traffic and disinfect trucks and automobiles entering your farm.
- Quarantine new animals and animals returning from a livestock show for two weeks.
- Do not feed on ground, use troughs or racks.
- Purchase animals from clean herds.
- Do not buy animals with signs of abscesses or poor body condition.
- Maintain a closed herd.
- Avoid consumption of raw milk and meat.

WATCH

- Conduct daily herd checks for early detection of illness.
- Watch the breeding herd for signs of abortion.
- Report any signs of zoonotic disease to appropriate

state and(or) federal animal health or public health department.

CONTROL

- Place quarantine pens in location that reduces germ transfer to healthy animals and people.
- Feed and treat sick animals *AFTER* feeding healthy animals.
- Use non-porous latex gloves when handling aborted fetuses and treating sick animals.
- Wear protective clothing and footwear when handling sick animals.
- Provide clean water not contaminated by animal waste or pen/pasture runoff.
- Control external parasites, rodents, wildlife, and cats in goat and sheep management areas.
- Properly dispose of carcasses and aborted fetuses following local regulations.
- Avoid using the same equipment for manure removal and feeding.
- Restrict animal movement on and off of the farm if a disease outbreak occurs.
- Avoid hauling animals with sores or abscesses to shows and sales.

- Consult with a diagnostic laboratory to determine cause of abortions or disease-related deaths.

CLEAN

- Wash hands or shower after handling animals.
- Clean pens, housing, working facilities, and service vehicles with potent disinfectant.
- Disinfect items like tattoo needles, trimmers, shears, brushes, feeders, blankets, and buckets
- Provide fresh clean bedding when kidding or lambing in pens or stalls.
- Properly dispose of gloves used to treat animals.
- Wash clothes worn when working livestock daily and separately from other clothing.

Visitors: There are two risks to manage regarding visitors: those that may transfer germs to your farm (other producers, farm service providers) and those that may pick up germs from your farm (other producers, city/suburban residents). Both risks should be equally considered when developing a biosecurity program for a sheep or goat operation. Zoonotic diseases are not restricted to farm families and the rural community, so care should be taken when hosting non-farm guests and interacting with visitors at shows and fairs.

Being a Visitor: As a producer, be careful not to spread your animals' germs to other farms you visit. Do not become the source of a zoonotic disease. Farms you visit may not have sufficient biosecurity practices, so consider the measures listed to self-restrict your activity on other farms to lessen the chance of bringing germs back to your farm.

In the Home: Biosecurity extends to the home. Proper personal hygiene, handling of dirty clothes, and following recommended food preparation and storage procedures will greatly lessen the risk of germs from your sheep and goats causing disease in your home. Infections are most severe in immunocompromised individuals.

Reference

United States Animal Health Association Committee on Foreign and Emerging Diseases. 2008. FOREIGN ANIMAL DISEASES, SEVENTH EDITION. <http://www.usaha.org/pubs/fad.pdf>. Accessed 04/12/2011.

