

Goatvetoz Autumn Newsletter

Goat Veterinary Consultancies - goatvetoz

Autumn 2021

Coughing goats

There are many reasons for a herd of goats to cough. Many people immediately think of lungworm. Certainly lungworm is one possible cause. It needs to be confirmed by doing a Baermann's test on some of your goats' faeces. Lungworms live in the lungs and the eggs are coughed up then swallowed. This means by the time these eggs reach the anus, the eggs have long hatched and larvae are excreted instead of eggs. So on a normal egg counting these are not seen. A Baermann's test involves suspending the faeces in a muslin square in warm water overnight and the larvae come out of the faeces and sink down to the bottom. The larvae can then be drawn up and examined under a microscope to identify the species.



There are 3 different types of lungworm which are:

- *Dictyocaulus filaria*
- *Muellerius capillaris*

- *Protostrongylus rufescens*

For the last 2 species, their lifecycle is a bit more complex than most worms as they require the larvae to be eaten by slugs or snails to develop into their next stage and then these slugs/snails are then eaten by the goats. This means they are more common in wet conditions or irrigated pastures. Many worm drenches kill lungworms and there are no problems so far with drench resistance.

Coughing can also be caused by lung irritants to the respiratory tract such as dust, pollen and ammonia fumes. Check the hay for dust and lay down on the floor of your goat shed and if you can smell ammonia then it is irritating your goats' lungs. Even if not the cause of the coughing these irritants can be a predisposing factor for lung infections.

Lung infections can be caused by:

- Viruses such as parainfluenza, Respiratory syncytial and herpes virus.
- Mycoplasmas
- Bacteria such as *Pasteurella multocida* or *Mannheimia (was previously named Pasteurella) haemolytica*

The first two can make goats more prone to bacterial infections and subsequent

Are your fences good enough?

They say that good neighbours depend on good fences and this is certainly true for rural properties with livestock. Fences keep out straying livestock and this keeps out diseases and parasites.

But you need to have a policy on what to do if you do get a straying animal. If it is a horse you have no issues unless it has kicked one of your goats. If it is a ruminant then it could have introduced Johnne's disease (JD) and hence collect any of its manure you see and isolate it away from pasture.

If it is a sheep then as well as JD, it could introduce drench resistant worms or cheesy gland etc. Isolate the sheep ASAP, do more frequent worm egg counts, vaccinate your goats with Glanvac and consider using Bioworma for the next couple of months.

If it was a goat, there could be even more problems so talk through options with your vet.

illness. Pneumonia generally causes reduced exercise tolerance, high temperature, being off feed, coughing, and difficulties breathing.

There are other causes of a single coughing goat in a herd and such a goat needs a vet exam as it could be cancer or an internal cheesy gland abscess.

Barbers Pole Worms

Many goat owners in eastern Australia have had major problems with barbers pole worms or *Haemonchus contortus*. It has also been causing problems in sheep flocks as well. The weather in late summer and early autumn in eastern Australia has been hot and humid and ideal conditions for the rapid hatching of worm eggs. A single female *Haemonchus* can lay up to 10,000 eggs per day and these take only 3 days to hatch. The complete lifecycle can take as little as 17 days (less in goats with poor immunity) so massive worm burdens can quickly build up both on pastures and inside goats 4th stomach.

Barbers pole worms have a lancet in their mouth like a single tooth and this damages the lining of the goats 4th stomach which allows the worms to lap up the blood from these wounds. The female worms look like Barbers

pole as their red gut containing blood winds around their long white reproductive tracts full of eggs.

Even immature worms can do a lot of damage to the abomasum wall and hence goats suddenly introduced to a heavily contaminated paddock can die of blood loss before eggs are produced.

Beside red blood cell loss, the goats also lose protein from their blood. This produces swellings as the goats fluid balance is upset and hence "bottle-jaw", where fluid accumulates underneath the goats jaw. This is always associated with pale mucous membranes, most easily seen around the eyes.

A high proportion of goats with "bottle-jaw" will die. Immediate drenching with an effective worm drench is required along with supportive treatment such as iron injections prescribed by your vet and a high protein and energy dense palatable diet. Vitamin B injections are also useful. Goats need all these plus time, to make new red blood cells. Careful nursing is needed to keep the goat alive long enough to make new red blood cells. Sometimes goats are so anaemic that a blood transfusion by a vet is needed. The first transfusion is not a problem re matching types.

Coccidiosis

Coccidiosis is caused by coccidia, a single celled parasite. There are many species and some produce many oocysts and some very few. Also coccidia have both an asexual and a sexual multiplication phases and it is the first that causes the most gut damage. Hence oocyst numbers are not like worm egg counts in predicting the level of infection. The life cycle is a minimum of 3 weeks so only seen in kids older than 3 weeks. Coccidiosis has signs of scouring, pot-bellied appearance, blood in faeces and straining. It can be fatal or cause permanent gut damage. A faecal examination will confirm the presence of oocysts. Coccidiosis can predispose kids to pneumonia.

Treatments registered for goats are very few but your veterinarians can prescribe veterinary medicines used in other species. Each livestock animal and poultry have different species of coccidia and hence won't infect each other.

Do you get my Tweets ?

Do you use twitter on your mobile phone? What was your favourite Tweet last season?

Mine was "Goats with CAE will produce milk that makes less cheese.

<http://ow.ly/9H0A50D25GX>"

See all my tweets at www.twitter.com/goatvet