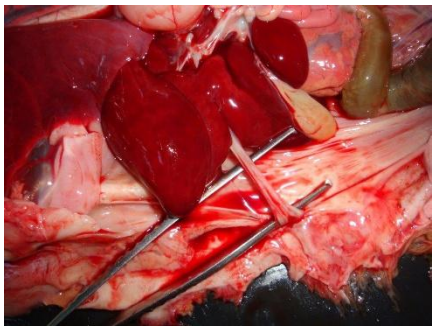
Goatvetoz Summer Newsletter

Goat Veterinary Consultancies - goatvetoz Summer 2025/2026

Joint ill

Joint ill happens when bacteria crawl up the tubes inside the naval cord and then get directly into the blood stream. You can see one of these tubes underneath my forceps.



These tubes allowed nutrients & oxygen from the placenta to nurture the developing foetus. The bacteria climb up & settle into the joints of the newborn kid where the blood flow slows down and sometimes even into the meninges (causing nervous signs later). After some weeks, the kid develops signs of swollen joints and lameness. These are difficult to treat as the joint has poor blood supply and a thick capsule so antibiotics can't easily penetrate to kill these bacteria. Sometimes these kids need to have their joints lavaged (washed out) and then add antibiotics directly into the joint after taking a sample to send to a veterinary laboratory for a culture and sensitivity test to find out exactly what bacteria it is & which antibiotic will kill it. Even if this treatment is successful in killing the bacteria, permanent joint damage may already have been done. Many of these kids end up getting euthanized.

So prevention is the best option. This means keeping kidding areas clean and dipping the naval cord of all newborn kids in either strong (7%) iodine or if you have none, then 4% clorhexidine solution. Dipping is better than spraying as you need to get inside the naval cord. Repeat the dipping if the mother licks it away or bites the cord shorter. Keep dipping every 6 hours until the cord is dry & shrivelled. There is a new product about to be registered in Australia called "Umbirez", which has proven to be better than iodine in very large trials, using twin lambs in the UK.

Barbers pole worms

Barbers pole worms are the common name for *Haemonchus contortus* worms. They get this name from the appearance of the female worms where the white reproductive tract full of worm eggs is spiralled around the red gut that is full of your goat's blood. These are one of the few worms in goats that you can actually see on post mortem as black scour worms etc are too tiny to see in the intestines. So always check the abomasum (4th stomach) of any goats that die suddenly for the presence of these worms or for the pinpoint red spots they leave behind. Sometime the worms detach just before the goat dies.

Unlike the myth that circulates, barbers pole worms don't actually suck blood but instead have a very sharp lancet in their mouth with which they create a wound in the lining of the abomasal wall and lap up the blood. This myth of being a blood sucker is a dangerous one as some goat

owners used to recommend giving half doses a couple of days apart so as not to leave open holes into the blood stream to bleed the goat out. In reality, you need to kill all the *Haemonchus* as soon as possible to stop them creating more wounds in the gut lining. Giving low doses causes drench resistant worms.

One of the important features of *Haemonchus contortus* worm larvae is their ability to go into hypobiosis, which is a form of arrested development. Think of the larvae as hibernating inside the wall of the abomasum ready to come out and mature into egg laying adults when conditions are better or when the goat has kidded (to ensure the next generation of kids get infected).

Haemonchus worms live around 90 days in the abomasum. But unfortunately their worm larvae in hypobiosis can survive 50 weeks.

In Western & South Australia and other mediterranean climate areas, this has allowed *Haemonchus* to survive the long hot summers when all the larvae on the pasture have been killed by the heat and lack of rain.

Unfortunately, this had a serious unforeseen consequences. When goats were drenched in summer, then only the drench resistant worms survived to infect pastures the next autumn after the break and mate with each other and spread the genes that allowed them to survive.

Climate change is increasing the areas where *Haemonchus* worms are a problem and also increasing the times of year when you can see problems. If you don't have *Haemonchus* worms on your farm (confirmed by larval culture) then you need to do everything possible to keep them out. This means keeping any new goats in quarantine, giving them a worm drench/es with multiple actives and feeding Bioworma® so that any drench resistant worm larvae that survive are killed in the manure. Don't let the new goats out until they have zero worm eggs in a faecal sample.

The clinical signs of barbers pole worms are:

- Sudden death
- Severe anaemia with pale mucous membranes
- "Bottle jaw" or fluid accumulation under the jaw due to low blood protein levels
- Poor body condition and coat (but often goats can die before they lose condition)

Note that scouring or diarrhoea is not a clinical sign. "Bottle jaw" can also be due to Johne's disease, and liver-fluke. Once a goat has developed "bottle jaw", there is a strong likelihood that the goat will die unless given urgent veterinary attention. Often the goat will need a blood transfusion.

Treatment options for goats will need a veterinary prescription as even though some drenches are registered for use on goats but goats need a higher dose rate than that on the label. Also most drenches & all combination drenches are only registered for sheep.

To learn more about controlling *Haemonchus*, do my Zoom training - email me goatvetoz@gmail.com

Do you use other social media?

You can follow me on Bluesky, Tumblr, Instagram, Youtube or Threads as goatvetoz or goatvet on X.