

INFECTIOUS ABORTION IN SHEEP AND GOATS - SHOULD I BE WORRIED?

Do you have pregnant ewes or does? Make sure you know what to do to keep them protected against infectious diseases that can cause abortion and lead to decreased productivity in your animals!!

*There are many different infectious agents (otherwise known as "**pathogens**") that can cause late-term abortions in sheep and goats. Some that are **zoonotic** that can be of risk to humans, include: **Coxiellosis ("Q fever"), chlamydiosis, and campylobacterosis.***

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SOME PATHOGENS THAT CAUSE ABORTION IN SHEEP AND GOATS CAN ALSO INFECT PEOPLE!



WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE?

ABORTION STORMS

This usually happens 2 to 3 weeks before the first expected lambing/ kidding when animals are exposed to a pathogen (bacteria, virus, or another organism that can cause disease) for the first time. An abortion storm happens when there is more than 2% abortions over a short time interval. When this happens, you need to call your vet ASAP.



ENZOOTIC ABORTION

After the initial abortion storm, the organism is usually still present in the herd/ flock. Sometimes, only part of the flock aborts (e.g. youngstock bred for the first time).



HOW DOES THIS HAPPEN?

These pathogens are most often transmitted **animal-to-animal** through **contamination** from aborted fetuses and placentas, and uterine discharges from aborting ewes and does.

CALL YOUR VET ASAP WHEN AN ABORTION STORM HAPPENS

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HOW YOUR VET CAN HELP

Your vet can help investigate, diagnose, and treat infectious abortions in your herd.

DIAGNOSIS

- In most cases, both the **fetus and placenta** (most important) must be sent to a diagnostic laboratory by your vet.
- Both samples can be **frozen** in the freezer until you discuss with your vet for sending them out.

TREATMENT

- Your veterinarian may prescribe antimicrobials in the **last 60 days of pregnancy** to reduce the abortion rate (if abortions are caused by bacterial diseases).
- Sometimes, even if ewes or does are treated, their offspring may be **stillborn** (born dead) or **born weak** due to placental damage.
- Sometimes, even if ewes or does are treated, there may still be **high lamb or kid mortality rates** (e.g. more than 2x normal mortality rate).

YOUR VET CAN HELP INVESTIGATE TO SEE IF YOU HAVE INFECTIOUS ABORTIONS IN YOUR HERD AND PROVIDE TREATMENT AS NEEDED



WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT THIS?

- **Vaccinate!** Canadians have access to four abortion vaccines. Some vaccines require a special permit, which your veterinarian will obtain to import into Canada. Talk to your vet about what vaccines should be used on your herd and flock. There have recently been issues with vaccine backorders, so talk to you vet well in advance!
- **New arrivals from other herds/flocks should be vaccinated** as per your vet's vaccination protocol, and quarantined (isolated from your flock/herd) upon arrival, for at least 3 weeks, before mixing with other animals.
- **Improve nutrition** for all pregnant ewes and does.

ASK YOUR VET ABOUT ABORTION VACCINES THAT COULD BE USED IN CANADA

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CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT

Here are some **recommendations** on how to **manage the contamination** in the environment if and when infectious abortions occur.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE?

- **Isolate aborting ewes or does.** Cull these animals to slaughter once they are healthy and free of drug residues.
- **Dispose immediately of aborted fetuses and placenta** (unless sending to a lab, then freeze until shipment and once you've discussed with your vet).
- **Discard and compost bedding from lambing areas. Make sure to wear protective clothing, masks, and goggles,** as these pathogens can also infect people and are a risk especially to pregnant women.
- **Once lambing/kidding is over, all pens should be cleaned and disinfected.** Make sure you wear protective equipment while this occurs.



WEAR PROTECTIVE CLOTHING, MASKS, AND GOGGLES WHEN HANDLING INFECTED MATERIAL AND WHEN CLEANING

RESOURCES

CAHSS Small Ruminant Surveillance Network: <https://cahss.ca/cahss-networks/small-ruminant>

WeCAHN Small Ruminant Surveillance Network and Resources Page: <https://wecahn.ca/wecahn-networks/small-ruminants-network>

Ontario Sheep Flock Health Document:

<https://www.ontariosheep.org/uploads/userfiles/files/h8%20Flock%20Health%202014.pdf>

Merck Manual Abortion of Sheep and Goats:

<https://www.merckvetmanual.com/reproductive-system/abortion-in-large-animals/abortion-in-sheep>

[https://www.merckvetmanual.com/reproductive-system/abortion-in-large-animals/abortion-in-goats#:~:text=Chlamydiosis%20\(Enzootic%20Abortion\)%20in%20Goats,to%20stillborn%20or%20weak%20kids.](https://www.merckvetmanual.com/reproductive-system/abortion-in-large-animals/abortion-in-goats#:~:text=Chlamydiosis%20(Enzootic%20Abortion)%20in%20Goats,to%20stillborn%20or%20weak%20kids.)

