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For more information,  
contact: Adaven Scronce  
Diversified Agriculture and Natural Resource Agent, Wildcat Extension District  
adaven@ksu.edu, (620) 331-2690

## **Managing Internal Parasites in Sheep & Goats**

Spring and summer are critical management periods for sheep and goat producers, with the warmer weather and increased rainfall making the perfect combination for internal parasites to thrive.

Parasites will thrive and develop on a pasture when there has been at least two inches of rainfall and the temperature is at least 50°F. This makes spring and summer the ideal time for parasites to thrive and develop in southeast Kansas. Because of this, sheep and goat producers are continually fighting a battle against internal parasites throughout the spring and summer. To get ahead and prevent serious internal parasites issues in your herd, it is important to routinely monitor your herd and treat animals that are affected by internal parasites.

Sheep and goats that are affected by internal parasites will have poor body condition even though they are being fed an adequate level of nutrition for their stage of growth or reproduction, and it will be difficult to get them to gain weight. In more severe cases in sheep, the wool will develop tender spots in the fibers and may begin to slip off, and in goats their hair may become coarse. In very severe cases of internal parasites, a sheep or goat will start to appear weak or listless. They will be slow getting up and may need to be encouraged to stand. While scouring caused by internal parasites is not seen very often in adult animals, lambs and kids often begin to scour when they have a large amount of internal parasites. The color of the inner eyelid is also an indication of internal parasites, specifically barber pole worms. When the eyelid appears pale pink to white in color, it is a sign of anemia and indicates the animal is overburdened with barber pole worms. A condition referred to as “bottle jaw” can also occur and is an indication of a heavy barber pole worm load. When bottle jaw occurs, the loose tissues under the jaw and tongue fill with fluid and become swollen.

One of the best ways to control internal parasites in sheep and goats is to monitor your herd for signs of internal parasite buildup on a routine basis. This can be done by taking fecal samples and doing a fecal flotation examination to determine the type and number of eggs present.

Taking samples routinely, every thirty to forty-five days, will help monitor the level of internal parasites in the herd and a warning can be given when parasite eggs show up or increase, and will be the quickest method to confirm physical symptoms. However, prevention through routine monitoring and deworming as needed is the best preventative tool available. There are many methods available to producers for treating internal parasites. Oral drenching is the most common method used. Deworming through feed, drinking water, and injectable are additional treatment methods. Producers should consult their veterinarian for recommendations on the use of these products. Only a limited number of deworming products have been approved for use in the sheep and goat industry.

When checking your herd each month for signs of internal parasites, routine management practices such as vaccinations and trimming hooves can also be incorporated to make a more efficient use of your time. Pasture management also plays a key role in preventing serious parasites problems, avoid overstocking pastures and rotate pastures regularly.

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