

From the
Premier Breeder
of British Registered
Soay Sheep



SOUTHERN OREGON SOAY SHEEP FARMS

Viewpoint

THIS MONTH'S FEATURE

DIY Sheep Care, Part 2

by Kathie Miller

“Poop” is not the most exciting of topics, but one that you eventually need to talk about if you are going to be a successful sheep farmer.

Learning to do rudimentary diagnostic exams yourself is part of being a good shepherd. A little knowledge about what to watch for in your animal's droppings is one simple diagnostic tool to have in your arsenal. By now you are aware that healthy sheep's feces are small, plump, moist pellets. When they are not you need to be concerned. Dry, pointed droppings can indicate dehydration, while loose stools and diarrhea can mean many things. Some of them are very serious, some easy fixes.

A sudden change in diet—from dry hay to fresh grass, or the sudden addition of supplements like moist beet pulp or grains—can cause digestive upset which can result in loose stools. Always introduce new

things to the diet gradually so systems can adjust.

Occasionally, sheep will encounter something in their pasture that does not agree with them, but the first thing that comes to mind with loose stools is worms. With the arrival of spring, worm numbers explode. Watch the flock for a few days. The problem may pass, but if it persists and a number of your sheep are exhibiting the same symptoms, it is time to take a fecal sample to the vet for analysis. Your worming regimen will be determined by the results. Animals that have serious scouring (diarrhea) may have a more serious problem and it is critical to identify the individual and get a specimen analyzed quickly. A fresh sample is important to an accurate diagnosis.



Kid in a candy store

With lambs, coccidiosis is typically the cause, but not always. With adults, it can be severe parasite overload or something more serious, like tumors or blockages.

Temperature is another valuable diagnostic tool, and when you call the veterinarian about a problem this is the first thing they will ask.

A normal sheep temperature ranges between 100.9-103.8°F (39-40°C) with an average between 102-103°. If you suspect there is something

wrong based on your ewe or ram's behavior (it appears depressed, is off by itself, has been off its feed, etc.) taking its temperature will confirm or eliminate infection as the cause. Digital rectal (medical) thermometers are ideal. The biggest task is to hold the sheep

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The Candy Store Out Back

by Kathie Miller

My friend came to see my new Soay flock. I was dying to show it off.

“What's wrong with your sheep?” she asked. “What do you mean? They look fine to me,” I replied, a bit deflated. “Look at their poop! Your field is a mess. You have intestinal worms and those animals need to be treated!” I hadn't even noticed. No one told me when I got sheep I would be dealing with WORMS.

I collected a sample as instructed and traipsed into my veterinarian's office with my little brown paper bag. I whispered to the girl at the front desk that I needed a “fecal float.” I didn't know what that meant, but that was what I was told to say.

A few days later, the results came back negative. No worms. There was nothing wrong. I was puzzled. Finally, the vet asked, “You have oak trees in your pasture, don't you?” I replied in

the affirmative. “The sheep are gorging themselves on acorns and, just like little kids eating too much candy, they have upset their stomachs.” Sure enough, when the acorns were gone the problem cleared up.

The following fall, my field was a “mess” again. This time I realized it would just be part of my annual autumn ritual. However, I am not so keen to have newcomers visit my farm at this time of year anymore. 🐑

RESOURCES

For more than you ever wanted to know about the control of Internal Parasites in sheep: <http://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/410/410-027/410-027.html>

For a simple fact sheet on the control of internal parasites: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM829X8.pdf>

Probios Gel for Ruminants is available in most feed stores and many online sources including [Valley Vet](#).

My friend Debbie found a better and much less expensive sharps container at [KV Supply](#).

For a \$10.50 fee my sanitation service will dispose of filled sharps containers. Yours may offer this service too.

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All advice in this newsletter has been used successfully on our farm. It is important to remember that every animal and situation is different. Before you try any of our suggestions, we urge you to consult your veterinarian.

DIY *continued from page 1*

still; putting a little Vaseline on the tip will make the procedure a little more comfortable. Keep in mind that stress can elevate an animal's temperature, so if you have had difficulty catching your patient let it relax before you insert the thermometer. If the temperature is elevated, talk to the vet. Often a short course of antibiotics will solve the problem.

When sheep are in pain they grind their teeth. This can indicate many things including severe digestive upset, which can be an indication of something else. Learn to watch for limping, cuts, scratches, foot problems, etc.

Familiarize yourself with which basic first aid products to use and keep them on hand. My kit always includes a small tube of triple antibiotic ointment for those small cuts that could use a little help, but don't warrant an antibiotic shot (jab). Probios gel (paste)* is another essential in my kit. Probios provides beneficial bacteria to help with rumination and maintain opti-

mum digestion and is very useful when animals are off their feed. It is also a good preventive when animals are going to be in a high stress situation, such as shipping. The gel comes in a large tube and I have found that an inch or two transferred to a 6cc (needleless) syringe is an easy way to administer it (orally) to a Soay sheep.*

Keeping a record of ailments and therapies (especially dosages) is important. Then, there are no questions about "Have I been giving injections for 4 or 5 days and what dosage did I use?" Make notes of your observations, any symptoms, and medication information from the vet. Always ask questions.

Gradually, you will build

SOUTHERN OREGON SOAY SHEEP FARM ANIMAL TREATMENT RECORD			
NAME	<i>Thobar Childa</i>	ID. NO.	<i>ORS1-53</i>
DOB	<i>29-4-01</i>	SEX	<i>E</i>
SIRE	<i>Niles</i>		
DAM	<i>Emerald</i>		
TREATMENT RECORD			
<i>5/6/05</i>	<i>1cc Bose</i>	<i>vet drew blood</i>	
		<i>selenium test - all w/in normal range</i>	
<i>5/8/06</i>	<i>abscess under jaw - noticed several days ago</i>		
<i>5/9/06</i>	<i>per vet continue Pen G</i>		
	<i>5 days if not improved in one week bring into launce</i>		
	<i>3cc Pen G</i>		
<i>5/10</i>	<i>3cc Pen G</i>		
<i>5/11</i>	<i>" "</i>		
<i>5/12</i>	<i>" "</i>		
<i>5/13</i>	<i>seems smaller</i>		
<i>5/16</i>	<i>abscess gone</i>		

Sample Treatment Record

a body of information that is peculiar to your animals and your situation that you can rely upon in the future. You will eventually learn which things you can take care of yourself and those for which you need help.

Finally, share your experiences with fellow breeders. All shepherds experience similar things, and sharing provides a pool of information that can be beneficial to everyone. 🐏

*The Probios powder is available in the UK but not the gel.

APRIL CALENDAR

- Most lambs arrive in April so be prepared.
- Assemble your list of names.
- Take a fecal sample to the vet; if necessary, worm with products that are safe for pregnant ewes.
- Clean up the barn yard and check for hazards to lambs, including places they can crawl under fences.
- Put cinder blocks in water tanks; if lambs fall in they can climb out.

TIP OF THE MONTH

To collect fecal samples, turn a zip-lock bag inside out forming a glove over your hand. Grasp the droppings, then slip the bag off your hand. Zip it closed.