

Sheep and Goat Newsletter
From the Extension Learning Farm in Canton, NY
By Betsy Hodge

The mild winter made feeding and watering over the winter easier than usual... but now we may be paying for it. There is an abundance of snails (that are a vector for flukes), raccoons (rabies), army worms (to eat up our pastures and hay), and possibly more internal parasites that survived to infect our sheep and goats. I have been doing fecal samples on the sheep at work and home and the levels of barber pole worms – the ones that cause anemia – are not too bad but all the lamb samples I have done show coccidia. It has been so dry lately that I am surprised to find so much coccidia in the samples. The lambs in question do not appear sick so I am hoping that they are just developing their immunity to coccidia and not being impaired for later growth/nutrient absorption. The flock is currently getting a sheep mineral with De-Cox in it to help control the coccidian population being shed by the ewes.

Tape worm has appeared in the feces of the lambs at home. Tapeworms normally look kind of like rice in the manure but sometimes you see a long white ribbon hanging out of a lamb. We will be de-worming them with Valbazen as soon as possible. We do not need to do the ewes as tape worm rarely affects the adult animals. Lambs are supposed to be able to stand a tapeworm load as well but I have found over the years that one strategic de-worming soon after the worms are spotted in the feces gives the lambs a boost. They rarely show signs of it again.

Heat stress can cause sheep and goats that are carrying a worm load to become much worse. Watch older animals and those nursing twins and triplets carefully during the hot weather. Animals that are yearlings and younger have not developed much resistance to parasites and also need extra attention. Watch for animals that seem droopy or lacking energy or have bottle jaw. The Barber Pole - the worm that causes anemia - rarely causes diarrhea. The anemia is what usually kills sheep and goats during the summer.

Liver flukes tend to cause problems that show up the next winter. Snails are a vector so keeping your animals out of areas where snails hang out is ideal but not always possible. At home we have tried keeping geese in the pasture to eat the snails but can't get them to stay out in the pasture with the sheep on rotation. When hot weather hit they figured out how to get out and showed up in the yard. When the sheep are close enough to the barn to be going in and out of the barnyard, the geese venture into the pasture on their own. We don't know whether they are eating snails or not but that is the idea.

One question I get asked a lot is what percentage of each cut make up a lamb carcass. After sending a large lamb to processing recently I had my trusty intern, Colleen Conklin, add up the weights of all the different parts and we did percentages. Here they are:

Lamb live weight – about 120 lbs

Total lbs of retail cuts – 42.6 lbs (not including the heart, tongue and liver) = 35.5%

Percentage of retail cuts:

Ground =	5.1 lbs	11.9%	
Stew =	3.1 lbs	7.3%	
Shanks =	4.2 lbs	9.9%	
Legs =	13.6 lbs	31.9%	One leg was a roast and one was made into steaks
Chops =	7.1 lbs	16.6%	
Shoulder =	9.5 lbs	22.3%	The shoulders were made into steaks

Do you have a bunch of odd “parts” in the bottom of your freezer? Maybe lamb tongues, hearts, etc? There are groups of pet owners who are “raw feeders”. They feed their cats and dogs raw meat with the bones in it. They are quite organized and will pay for your extras. I am searching on Yahoo Groups and will look into organizing a pick up in our area.

The heat is very hard on our Pyrenees guard dogs. They take the cold better than the heat. Shade, fresh water and a breeze help them survive. Brushing out their extra hair helps, too. My daughters helped me brush out our dogs. The dogs looked like they had shrunk when we were done and it looked like we murdered something furry in the middle of the field. We also imagined marketing guard dog socks and scarves.

Lamb prices have been down some during June. The supply has been high and the demand relatively low. There is typically a slump in the summer. Lamb is so good on the grill it is surprising that lamb demand is low in the summer. There are some lamb-eating holidays coming up. Ramadan has worked its way all the way back into July and August with the beginning July 20th and the end about August 19th. Rosh Hashanah follows on September 17-18 and the Festival of the sacrifice is October 12. Any of those times should be a good time to market lambs except every time we try to hit the end of Ramadan there are too many lambs at the sale. After these holidays are over there should also be a good market for our spring born lambs as well. Anything born in the fall will be in demand at Christmas and in January and February.

There is interest in a truck for a cooperative marketing effort sometime between mid-August and mid-September and maybe another one later in the fall. A group of sheep farmers from Franklin and St. Lawrence Counties are working on setting up a “real” co-op called the Northern Adirondack Lamb Cooperative. Their goal is to increase their marketing power by working together. There are many questions when setting up a co-op and the group is meeting regularly to work through the details. They hope to market to CSAs and other buyers.

Another group of sheep farmers is working on a grant to train veterinarians and farmers to do sheep artificial insemination (AI). The Extension Farm flock has used rams with AI sires regularly but they are hard to find. Hopefully we can create some in the area. The group will have to use LambPlan to keep good records in order to make good decisions about which rams and ewes will be good breeding stock.

A wool pool is in the works. It should happen sometime in August or September. I will try to line up a Saturday or Sunday when sheep producers can bring their wool to the Extension Farm and we will give you a receipt and then market the wool. After the 4th of July holidays are over I can check on the wool prices at different places. If you have wool to go, email me with approximate amounts (bmf9@cornell.edu or 315-379-9192). Wool bags are ideal but good heavy contractor bags will work. Keep you wool dry and free of rodents.

Our 42 sheep with lambs are being pasture with the beef herd and about 20 dry dairy cows. It is funny to see the sheep walk back and forth under the big dairy cows. The cows enjoy the sheep minerals and drinking out of the sheep tank. Charlie, our farm manager, devised a sheep creep. He strung a hot wire at the top of step in posts and put it in front of the sheep barn so the sheep can sneak into the barn and use their waterer and get minerals and the cows have to stay out! I appreciate it because we will be catching the sheep soon and vaccinating them in the barn. If the cows get in there they leave a slippery mess on the floor!

The other 40 some sheep that are either due in the fall or are ewe lambs are at the farm down the road in their own rotation. They have a water tank on a wagon that we pull around with the

tractor. The battery fence charger is hooked to the tractor battery. It lasts quite a few days. Charlie runs the tractor a little while most mornings while he checks the sheep. At first I thought this was kind of crazy but it actually works well unless you need the tractor to rake hay. Even then the sheep were fine for the afternoon. The wagon provides shade for the guard dogs and sheep as well. At home we use an old hay wagon and keep a metal trash can with dog food and one with minerals right on the wagon to make it easy to feed the dog and put out minerals for the sheep. At work we are using a "two-wheeler" which means if you take the tractor out, the wagon has to come, too.

We get to move lots of electro-net in a week! It is a lot of work but you get to see the animals and your pasture regularly. You also get to see things like new born fawns, blue birds, bobolinks and wild flowers. I also saw the cows chasing a coyote! The coyote was inside the electro-net somehow (we may have fenced in its den) and one young heifer started chasing it and then the rest joined in. Don't know what happened to the coyote but I am guessing it won't mess with the sheep while those cows are nearby.

The cows also do a good job distracting the flies...they do bother the cows but there are hardly any around the sheep. In my home sheep barn they can be bad so I have put out traps and sticky paper. It gives me great satisfaction to see the big roll of sticky paper covered with flies!