

WORM CONTROL IN GOATS

Gastrointestinal nematodes are a particular problem for goats due to their grazing habitats and poor immunity. Heavy infestations of worms can result in severe losses for goat keepers both economically and physically. However, more common signs of a parasite problem are depressed milk yield, unthrifty animals and poor feed utilisation (veterinary advice should be sought for all of these symptoms). The main species of importance are *Teladorsagia*, *Trichostrongyles* and *Haemonchus*. These are the same species of roundworms that cause problems for sheep and for camelids (alpacas & llamas).

The methods for controlling worms in goats are the same as for sheep and should be included in a goat health plan drawn up in conjunction with your vet. Control methods include anthelmintics, pasture management, alternative forages and breeding for resistance. The problem of anthelmintic resistance is found in goat herds as well as sheep flocks and therefore herd owners should look to reduce the use of anthelmintics for parasite control. If anthelmintic resistance is present in your sheep flock it will also be present in your goat herd. Anthelmintic resistance has developed due to a number of reasons including routine drenching (drenching every 3 or 4 weeks regardless of need), under drenching i.e., not administering the correct dosage and due to bad drenching technique. Recommendations are to use faecal egg counts (FEC) to determine if a drench is required and grazing management. If an anthelmintic drench is used, the drenching gun must be properly calibrated to dispense the correct dosage.

The current recommendations for the sustainable control of parasites in sheep (SCOPS) are also valid for goat owners. Where possible, owners should reduce dependency on anthelmintics through the use of grazing management, FEC monitoring, alternative forages and feed supplements and breeding objectives. When anthelmintics are used, check the drench gun is accurate, drench to the heaviest in the group, change the drench group annually and check the withdrawal period. The health status of your herd should be monitored through the active use of your health plan.