Setting up yearly preventive health plan for sheep, goats, camelids

Blake Miller, DVM
Northwest Mobile Vet, Portland, OR 97206

Abstract
The objective of this presentation is to provide useful and applicable information about preventative medicine that can be imparted in an oral or written form to clients that own small ruminants or camelids. Owners often have serious issues requiring immediate attention that could have been avoided if proper husbandry and maintenance was provided prior to the incident, further reinforcing the idea that preventative medicine is the best medicine.

Keywords: sheep, goats, camelids, llama, alpaca

Examinations
Veterinary exams should be performed every 6 months.

Diet
Please offer orchard hay in the amount recommended by your veterinarian.

Alfalfa
If you have male goats, alfalfa should be discontinued as it can lead to urinary calculi which can be a serious complication. Alfalfa should only be offered to female goats that are growing, pregnant, or nursing. Please discuss questions with us in regard to the amount that should be fed during these times.

Grain
If you have male goats, grain should be discontinued as it can lead to urinary calculi which can be a serious complication. Grain should only be offered to female goats that are growing, pregnant or nursing. Please discuss questions with us in regard to the amount that should be fed during these times.

Minerals
Purchase a goat-specific mineral and have it available for all animals to consume at will. NOTE: If sheep are commingled with goats, a sheep-specific mineral should be provided to all animals as the higher copper levels in goat mineral can be toxic to sheep. If goats are being fed a sheep mineral because these animals are commingled, goats can be supplemented with a 2g copper bolus every 6-12 months as needed to meet their copper requirements.

Water
Clean, debris-free water should be provided at all times in multiple locations to encourage water consumption.

Baking soda
Purchase baking soda and have available in a container for animals to consume at will.

Iodized salt
Purchase iodized salt and have in container for all animals to consume at will.

Housing

Feeder/mineral buckets/water buckets
Have all these containers at neck level to prevent spread of parasites through fecal contamination. Clean water buckets with dilute bleach solution once a month.

Shavings/bedding
To reduce chances of fecal contamination, clean barn out and re-bed weekly.

Guard animals
Even with proper fencing, predators can sometimes attack your herd. Livestock guardian dogs, miniature and regular donkeys, and llamas work well as guard animals and integrate well into the herd.

Medical management
Delicing
UltraBoss® (dosage of 3 mL/100 pounds of body weight on base of neck) should be applied to the nape of the neck topically (similarly to giving flea medication to dogs) with a dosing syringe once every month to prevent lice infestation. Please begin September 1 and continue through April 1. Lice is a disease of the winter!

Fecals
Fecal samples should be performed every 3-6 months on 10% of the herd, or immediately if an animal is sick, has diarrhea or is losing weight.

Vaccinations
CDT should be administered at 6 weeks, 10 weeks and 14 weeks, then boostered every 6-12 months thereafter. Pregnant animals should receive an additional CDT vaccine 30 days before kidding.

Hoof trims
Your goats should have their hooves trimmed every 3-6 months.

Biosecurity screens
A one-time blood test is recommended for all goats or sheep on site, or if any new goats or sheep are being introduced. This tests for 4 common (CAE, CL, OPP, Johne’s) lifelong, contagious diseases that goats and sheep may be infected with. This should
be performed after 6 months of age, and typically only requires 1 test for their whole life. This is a common test that people will ask for when adopting new goats or sheep.

**Disbudding**
Goat kids should be disbudded when the buds are about the size of chocolate chips (not Hershey kisses!). This is usually around 5-10 days of age.

**Newborn vitamins**
All goat kids should receive Vitamin A/D, Bo-Se and tetanus antitoxin.

**Species differences**
- Llamas and alpacas should always have loose mineral available.
- Llamas, alpacas, and sheep do not need disbuds.
- Llamas and alpacas do not need biosecurity screens.
- Hoof trims on small ruminants and camelids are different.
- Minerals for sheep are different than minerals for goats which are different for camelids.