

# AABP-AASRP Joint Sessions

Moderator: Jim Fallen

## Working with Small Ruminant Shows and Sales

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### Abstract

Veterinarians can be a valuable resource to youth and livestock producers in presenting healthy, attractive sheep and goats for public display or sale by working with fairs and sales to exclude sheep and goats with contagious diseases and zoonoses, unsightly conditions, and animals otherwise unsuitable for public display. Complete and accurate certificates of veterinary inspection and compliant scrapie identification, consistent pre-show or sale health examinations, and review and assessment of rules and policies to best serve the owners, management, and public are key ways veterinarians can contribute to shows and sales. Exhibition sheep and goats must always be considered food-producing animals rather than companion animals when making medical decisions regarding drug use and medical outcomes. Working directly with youth and the organizing committees to assure safe housing and rules which inform exhibitors and provide a framework for fair and equitable rules of enforcement are key to assuring the satisfaction of livestock exhibitors, show or sale management, and the consumer public.

### Résumé

Les vétérinaires peuvent être une ressource de valeur pour les jeunes et les producteurs de bétail, afin de produire des chèvres et des moutons attrayants et en bonne santé pour l'exposition publique ou la vente, en collaborant avec les salons d'exposition et les vendeurs pour exclure les moutons et les chèvres avec des maladies contagieuses et des zoonoses ou des conditions peu agréables à la vue ou tout autres animaux jugés inaptes à l'exposition publique. De façon primordiale, les vétérinaires peuvent contribuer aux salons et aux ventes en émettant des certificats complets et justes d'inspection vétérinaire et de traitement adéquat de la tremblante du mouton, en faisant des examens de santé sur une base régulière avant l'exposition ou la vente et en faisant une revue et l'évaluation des règles et directives qui servent le mieux les propriétaires, les gestionnaires et le public.

Les moutons et les chèvres d'exposition doivent toujours être considérés comme des animaux de production plutôt que des animaux de compagnie lorsqu'on doit prendre des décisions reliées à l'utilisation de drogues et aux résultats médicaux. Travailler directement avec les jeunes et les comités d'organisation afin d'assurer un logement sécuritaire et des règles qui informent les exposants tout en fournissant un cadre pour une application juste et équitable sont des éléments clés pour bien satisfaire les exposants de bétail, les gestionnaires d'exhibition et de vente et le public payant.

### Introduction

Youth project dairy and meat goats and other animals offered for exhibition or sale present special challenges and opportunities for the practitioner. The practitioner must provide affordable, quality health care to youth project animals, but is also positioned to educate young owners about the responsibilities of producing wholesome food of animal origin and about presenting attractive, healthy animals for public display at exhibitions or for public sale. Practitioners may be asked to certify the quality of animals by performing health examinations of sheep and goats at fairs and sales or by providing health certificates for animals moving out of state for exhibition or sale. The example of professionalism and ethics set by practitioners for these youth has far greater impact than practitioners may realize. Further, the practitioner has responsibility to the public to assure that animals presented for exhibition are presented in good health and cared for with sensitivity to the welfare of the animals.

### Health Examinations of Animals for Shows and Sales

It is the responsibility of the examining veterinarian to screen animals for show and sale for contagious or unsightly conditions. However, exhibitors/consignors have a right to know the expectations of the fair or sale regarding criteria that will be applied their animals. The job can be made easier and more satisfying if exhibitors

and show/sale committees agree on health guidelines so that the examining veterinarian is simply the unbiased evaluator of animals presented for examination. These guidelines should be published well in advance of the show/sale so that participants may make sound judgments in selecting stock for show/sale.

Clinical evidence of contagious diseases such as keratoconjunctivitis (pinkeye), contagious ecthyma (soremouth), or active ringworm should be reason for exclusion and immediate removal of animals from premises. It is desirable to request that an isolation area be available for cases where immediate transportation is not available. For other diseases, the intent of the show/sale committee must be known before proper criteria can be applied. For example, animals with abscesses presumably due to *Corynebacterium pseudotuberculosis* clearly must be excluded if the abscesses show signs of hair separation, balding, drainage or scabbing. Animals with healing suture lines from abscess removal would also present a significant risk to others. However, the show/sale committee must decide if evidence of infection such as enlarged lymph nodes or abscess scars are to be reasons for exclusion of animals from competition or sale. Commonly these animals would be accepted for competition but not allowed for sale. Veterinarians must be careful to distinguish between vaccine reaction sites and swellings associated with abscesses.

Some conditions may not present a risk of contagious disease but may make an animal unsuitable for public display. For example, open dehorning wounds, severe lacerations, rectal prolapse repair sites, or conditions of the eye may be unsightly and offensive. Some disease conditions such as alopecia from healing (inactive) ringworm lesions or granulation tissue of the cornea from a healing ulcer, while no longer contagious may be unsightly and unsuitable for public display. Veterinarians attending to these animals prior to shows or sales must help owners make good decisions about entering convalescing animals for show or sale.

Heritable conditions such as entropion or ectropion and defects in conformation such as musculoskeletal unsoundness or teat defects (in dairy goats) may be a consideration for sale animals, but must be clearly outlined in the sale rules. Similarly, the veterinarian may be asked to examine breeding rams and bucks. The sale rules should clearly define if conditions such as scrotal hernias, epididymitis, minimal scrotal circumference, or other breeding soundness findings will be assessed. In show animals such conditions would usually be detected at the time of judging.

### **Diseases of Public Health Concern**

Veterinarians should be mindful of the zoonotic potential of diseases of small ruminants. Dermatologic

diseases such as ringworm and soremouth can be spread to other animals and to humans, especially children. In cases where animals, especially neonates, are housed in a petting zoo or animal nursery, risk of exposure to diarrheal diseases and abortifacients with zoonotic potential are also of concern.

*Ringworm and Club Lamb Fungus* – Ringworm in goats, most commonly caused by *Trichophyton sp*, has always been a concern for exhibitors and show committees. Active lesions can be recognized by the presence of erythema, scaling and/or crusts in and at the periphery of characteristic circular areas of alopecia. In animals where the disease is no longer apparently active, the veterinarian should be vigilant in examining for the presence of additional early lesions. Ringworm can be easily spread by use of common clippers and other grooming equipment, so owners should be encouraged to avoid lending grooming equipment and to disinfect clipper blades between animals.

In recent years there has been an apparent increase in the incidence of ovine ringworm or “club lamb fungus.” In addition to the characteristic circular lesions of ringworm, skin of affected lambs also shows thick crusts and clumping of wool. These lesions can be easily overlooked in unshorn sheep. Shearing, washing, and blanketing (especially with tight body stockings) of lambs provides an environment favoring the multiplication of the *Trichophyton* organism. Lesions in humans can be quite severe if untreated; history of potential exposure to ovine ringworm should be drawn to the attention of the attending physician. The increase in popularity of goat market wether projects has led to increased risk of exposure of goats to club lamb fungus. The inclusion of goats at jackpot lamb/kid events, commingling of goats with high-risk lambs at FFA/4-H group housing barns, and lack of familiarity of youth project members with methods to prevent spread by direct contact or fomites, such as clipper blades, has led to the apparent appearance of club lamb fungus in market goats at fairs and shows.

*Contagious Ecthyma* – Contagious ecthyma is caused by a parapoxvirus and is diagnosed by characteristic proliferative scabs and crusts of the lips and nostrils. The commissure of the mouth is most commonly affected, but lesions may occur around the nostrils, ears, eyes, scrotum, tail, and vulva. Clipper blades and tattooing instruments are common fomites spreading the infection in show animals. Herds and flocks with a history of contagious ecthyma infection may choose to vaccinate kids or lambs well in advance of expected shows. Lesions in humans are often associated with abraded skin on the hand. These lesions are painful and often take many weeks to heal.

**Other Zoonotic Diseases** – Most animals presented for show or sale are healthy juvenile or adult animals. Special attention must be paid to situations where neonates or females that may be lambing or kidding are on display. In these cases, potential exists for exposure to abortifacients such as *Coxiella burnetti* or to agents causing diarrhea in the neonate such as *Cryptosporidium parvum* or *Salmonella sp.* Care should be taken to display animals so that the public does not come in contact with placental fluids and so that neonates are carefully monitored and their handling minimized.

### Health Certificates for Sale and Show Animals

Sheep and goats being shipped out of state for exhibition or sale will require interstate health certificates. Veterinarians should call the state of destination to confirm testing and permit requirements (requirements are available at [www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/sregs](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/sregs)). In addition to regulatory requirements for interstate movement, shows and sales may have additional requirements for eligibility. For example, regional sales may require *Brucella ovis* testing of rams or caprine arthritis-encephalitis serologic testing of goats. Veterinarians are advised to request a copy of the show or sale rules from owners before issuing health papers to be sure that no additional requirements have been overlooked. Similarly, sale veterinarians issuing health certificates for animals going to new states of destination need access to health certificates issued by the veterinarian of the herd of origin in order to make sound judgements in issuing health certificates for animals from herds not available for examination.

The Scrapie Eradication Program and Scrapie Flock Certification Programs have slightly different identification requirements. Each state may impose additional rules that exceed federal standards. For example, California requires the identification of all sheep and goat wethers for exhibition; identification of wethers under 18 months is not required under federal standards. Acceptable identification (federal) for show animals is described at [www.animalagriculture.org/scrapie/gotosho.pdf](http://www.animalagriculture.org/scrapie/gotosho.pdf).

### Housing and Transportation Concerns

Veterinarians should be sure that owners are informed about safe and humane methods of transporting livestock. Provision of adequate feed and water with planned periods of rest can minimize stress in animals being shipped long distances. Goats that have been recently clipped are especially susceptible to sunburn and to changes in environmental temperatures. Trailers should have adequate ventilation to avoid respiratory compromise and proper footing to avoid injury.

Stress associated with shipping, housing at fairs, and commingling of animals in the show or sale environment can predispose sheep and goats to pneumonia or clinical expression of existing subclinical diseases, such as coccidiosis or mastitis. Dietary extremes, such as sudden feed changes or high concentrate diets fed to market lambs and kids, may be associated with greater risk of lactic acidosis or enterotoxemia.

Housing facilities may pose additional risk of disease. Owners may wish to disinfect pens at fairs prior to unloading animals to prevent potential exposure of their animals to ringworm, soremouth, or abscess organisms possibly brought in by prior occupants. Safety from predators is not a common problem at fairs and shows, but safety of show animals from dogs is a high priority in the small flock home environment. Many inexperienced flock owners recognize fencing needs to confine sheep and goats, but overlook fencing needs to provide adequate protection from dogs and other predators.

### Ethical Concerns for Sale and Show Animals

Veterinarians must be familiar with each species and breed defects and their evaluation in order to avoid misleading owners regarding the assessment and repair of physical defects. For example, extra teats or teats that have been removed are a very serious fault in a dairy goat doe or a disqualification for a dairy goat buck, while this defect would not be discriminated against in many other species. Similarly, a physical defect such as a navel hernia is a disqualification in a dairy goat because of the potential heritability of such a trait. Implications of surgical repair of scrotal hernias, eyelid or limb deformities, or other alterations of conformation should be explored thoroughly before action is taken. Veterinarians must counsel owners about the breed-specific assessment of physical defects before carrying out surgical repair or alteration. The medical necessity of surgical procedures which alter phenotype must be considered before any alteration of phenotype is carried out in a livestock specie, and the option for castration considered in males in cases where surgical repair of physical defects is done.

Intentional procedures which alter conformation include removal of the last rib in lambs, alteration of mammary gland conformation in does, or correction of inappropriate breed character such as removal of skin patches to correct color. These procedures are clearly unethical and should not be performed.

Management practices which should be discouraged include icing of muscles and excessive exercising of market lambs, intentional fluid loading or feed/water deprivation of lambs to manipulate market weight, and use of liquid diets to alter lamb appearance. The veterinarian must be knowledgeable about these practices so

that sound management advice can be given to assure proper animal care.

### **Animal Welfare Concerns**

Veterinarians have a responsibility to help owners provide a safe and comfortable environment for their livestock. Owners should be trained to perform necessary management procedures such as disbudding (dehorning) and castration at the earliest possible age, and perform procedures as functionally necessary rather than to achieve a specific aesthetic appearance. For example, it is popular to castrate market kids leaving the least possible scrotal tissue (for a trim appearance), yet delaying castration time to maximize growth. The veterinarian can work with the wether producers to agree on castration ages and procedures which meet the goals of the producer while take animal welfare and optimal wound healing into account. Castration or dehorning wounds should be completely healed before animals are presented for exhibition.

Animals should have clean feed and water available while at fairs and sales. Owners should avoid sudden dietary changes, bringing feed with them to the fairs or shows whenever possible. The use of muzzles on market lambs and kids, which have become popular in recent years, is discouraged and rules preventing their use have been adopted in some areas. Animals should be bedded in clean straw or other bedding material, and pens should be cleaned regularly to avoid accumulation of ammonia and contamination of feeding equipment with fecal material. Animals should be cared for according to their routine schedules, and practices such as withholding feed or over-uddering of milking does discouraged. Astute judges will detect and discriminate against animals improperly presented for show. Note that size of mammary glands does not equate to degree of distension; palpation for pressure and texture are needed to assess comfort. A small mammary gland may be over-distended, while a large mammary gland may be soft and not full.

### **Lamb Tail Docking**

Tail docking length is a controversial area where the veterinarian is often asked to assess adequacy of tail length at entry check-in or pre-show weigh-in. Ultrashort tail docks may have an unsightly appearance for public display, hence many fairs require a liftable tail or some criteria indicating presence of caudal vertebrae on the animal. Work with fairs and shows to be certain that rules on tail length are clearly spelled out and uniformly applied. Some fairs allow youth a window of opportunity to replace an animal that fails to meet tail length requirements at the time of fair enrollment/identification at the beginning of the mandatory ownership

period. Ultrashort tail docking increases the risk of rectal prolapse. Advocates of ultrashort docking point out that docking length is not the only risk factor for rectal prolapse – heredity, respiratory disease, low-fiber diet, parasites, and other conditions which result in coughing or abdominal straining also increase the risk of rectal prolapse. The conventional length of tail for show sheep is shorter than the distal caudal fold length found in commercial sheep production and endorsed by American Veterinary Medical Association, American Association of Small Ruminant Practitioners, and Association for the Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care (AALAC). Coordinated effort across the country is needed to raise awareness of consumer sentiment, standardize policy, and address this issue among club lamb producers and the market animal judging community. Club lamb producers and judges need only look at the bovine tail docking issue to grasp the growing importance of addressing this issue.

### **Market Animal Quality Assurance and Residue Avoidance**

The ultimate goal of a youth market project is the sale of a wholesome lamb or kid with high carcass quality and assured freedom from chemical and microbial residues. Programs are being developed in some states which require youth to attend quality assurance training sessions as a prerequisite for fair entry. Veterinarians should become knowledgeable about these programs and are encouraged to volunteer their participation in the planning and conduct of these programs.

Because of the limited number of products labeled for use in sheep and goats, medical care of sheep and goat breeding and market projects often involves the extra-label use of drugs (ELUD). Care should be taken to educate owners about the need for accurate record keeping, the need for a valid veterinary-client-patient relationship, and the ELUD only when an approved drug for that species and indication is not available. Care should be taken to establish a reliable withholding time prior to administration of drugs in an extra-label application. Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank is a valuable source of information for helping veterinarians determine reasonable withholding times for drugs not approved for use in sheep and goats. Before medicating lactating does or ewes, veterinarians should determine if their milk or the meat from nursing kids or lambs will be used for human consumption, or if their milk will be fed to calves, pigs, or other livestock intended for human consumption. Treated milk should be discarded and/or animals consuming the treated milk should also be held for appropriate withdrawal periods.

Many fairs are now incorporating drug residue testing as part of their market animal quality assurance

programs. Market lambs and kids should be withheld from all medicated feeds, even those without labeled withdrawal times, for several weeks before the fair to assure a negative result on antibiotic screening tests. Meat processors must be assured a wholesome lamb of high carcass quality if these companies are to continue supporting youth programs by slaughtering youth market animals.

### **Conclusion**

The veterinarian can be a valuable resource to youth and livestock producers for presenting healthy,

attractive dairy and meat goats for public display or sale. The role of these animals as food-producing species, rather than companion animals, must not be forgotten when making medical decisions regarding drug use and medical outcomes. Veterinarians must be mindful of the examples of ethics and professionalism they set in caring for and consulting with this special group of livestock and their owners. Working with youth to achieve their project goals is a most rewarding experience.