

The Ontario Animal Health Network is a program focusing on early disease detection so as to identify trends in animal health issues. Information was obtained from a quarterly survey of practicing veterinarians and laboratory data from the Animal Health Laboratory. It is the intent of this program to improve the health of small ruminants in Ontario.



## Ontario Animal Health Network (OAHN) Small Ruminant Expert Network Quarterly Producer Report – Fall 2016

Fall 2016

Report #10

### Highlights

- Q3 Surveillance Summary
- Transportation Decision-Making
- Cache Valley Virus Reminder

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@OntAnHealthNet

Email  
[oahn@uoguelph.ca](mailto:oahn@uoguelph.ca)

## Q3 Surveillance Summary

### Clinical Impressions Survey

In youngstock, practitioners surveyed indicated that the top clinical issues for the quarter dealt with **coccidiosis, hemonchosis, pneumonia, cryptosporidiosis, and footrot**. Lambs and kids were equally affected.

The main clinical findings for adult sheep and goats were **hemonchosis, mastitis, caseous lymphadenitis, lameness, and footrot**.

### Animal Health Laboratory Data

Testing for caprine arthritis encephalitis (CAE) virus and maedi visna (MV) virus continues to increase. Testing for CAE increased 14% since the first quarter of this year, while testing for MV increased 33%. The number of positive CAE test results remained steady across the three quarters (8% to 11%). The number of positive MV test results was more variable, ranging from 4% to 19%.

## Things to Consider Before Sending Sheep and Goats to Slaughter

Culling and transportation decisions are part of farming; however, there are challenges with making the right decisions. Farmers need to decide between several options:

- Treat an animal and wait for the meat and milk withdrawal times to be completed before transporting
- If considered suitable for human consumption and not jeopardizing the animal's welfare, send the animal direct to a local abattoir, or to a livestock auction
- Euthanize on farm given health/welfare reasons.

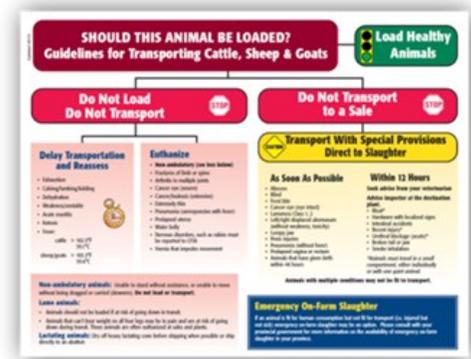
One of the biggest challenges is timing – when to remove the animal from the flock/herd. Animals are removed when their economic value falls below a critical point. However, poor production/reproduction may be the result of an unrecognized disease. Making timely culling decisions is best for the welfare of the animal. Waiting too long can result in an animal being unfit for transport and/or condemned at slaughter.

Transportation is stressful for sheep and goats as it involves change – the truck ride, the noise, and the strange environment when entering a livestock auction or abattoir; as well as mixing animals from different flocks/herds. Weak and thin animals are less able to cope. Stresses that a healthy animal may tolerate may be fatal to a less fit animal. The



welfare of the animal(s) being transported is always paramount. There are a number of things to consider prior to loading an animal for transport. The Ontario Humane Transport Working Group developed *Guidelines for Transporting Cattle, Sheep & Goats: Should this Animal be Loaded?* Reviewing these Guidelines will help you make informed decisions prior to shipping livestock from the farm.

<http://www.farmfoodcareon.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/national-cattle-sheep-goats.pdf>



When shipping cull animals, farmers should be thinking about how long it may take that animal to get to its final destination – whether that final destination is another farm or a slaughter plant. There could be multiple stops (including unloading and being re-loaded), as well as extended periods without access to feed or water. **If animals are taken to a livestock auction, this is not a final destination**, and they will be transported at least once, if not several times before they reach their final destination. Small ruminants consigned to markets may be in the marketing chain for several days. While many cull sheep and goats are purchased by slaughter plants, many farmers are unaware that there is an active trading network for these animals in Ontario, and many animals may be purchased and then be resold at later auctions, purchased by dealers to be resold, or assembled for larger orders for slaughter facilities in Ontario or the northeastern US. Some sheep and goats may be bought and taken back to another farm in Ontario. In several trace back inspections of cull sheep and goats at auction, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) inspectors have determined that farmers are unaware of the long periods animals may be in the marketing chain prior to slaughter.

What's the best option for selling sheep and goats? **Weak or sick animals** should not be loaded and transported to livestock sales or to a collection yard. These types of animals, if they are fit for transport under provincial and federal transport regulations (see Guidelines) and fit for human consumption, should be sold directly to a slaughter plant – the OMAFRA website has a list of provincial slaughter plants. Contact the slaughter plant directly and establish if they will buy sheep or goats and if so, on what days. Some plants will slaughter animals and return the meat to the producer. If you do not have a local slaughter plant in your area and animals are consigned to a livestock auction, request they go “direct to slaughter”. All animals to be sold “direct to slaughter” will be examined by veterinary inspectors at the sales yard, transported directly to slaughter, and after passing inspection at the abattoir, the producer will be paid. A reminder to not send sheep or goats with orf (soremouth) lesions to auction. This is a zoonotic disease (transferable to people) and many people will handle the animals along the way. As always, **“Buyer Beware”** if you are considering purchasing animals from the sales barn to take back to your farm. This is considered a risky biosecurity practice.

Generally, animals are mostly condemned at slaughter for two reasons: inhumane transportation resulting in undue suffering, and infectious diseases that indicate a risk to food safety. A carcass may also be condemned if it doesn't undergo the biochemical changes that turn ('set') muscle into meat. Sheep and goats are most often condemned due to lameness (non-weight-bearing/three-legged lame), emaciation, pneumonia and

### OAHN Small Ruminant Network Team:

Southern ON  
Dr. Rex Crawford

Northern ON  
Dr. Connie Dancho

Eastern ON  
Dr. John Hancock

OVC  
Dr. Paula Menzies

AHL  
Dr. Maria Spinato

OMAFRA  
Dr. Jocelyn Jansen  
Dr. Tim Pasma  
Dr. Alexandra Reid

OAHN Coordinator  
Dr. Melanie Barham

multiple-abscess type diseases in organs and joints. Sheep and goats become thin for a variety of reasons – insufficient or poor quality feed, age and dental disease, lameness, as well as infectious diseases that may cause wasting such as caseous lymphadenitis, Johne’s disease, CAE (goats), MV (sheep), and some cancers. While thin carcasses may fetch a premium in some markets supplied by provincial plants, we must ensure that thin animals are fit for transport and likely to pass veterinary inspection. Many of the animals described above are candidates for on-farm euthanasia. If you have questions as to whether a sheep or goat should be sent for slaughter, talk to your veterinarian for advice.

Transportation and slaughter are under ever increasing scrutiny. Making informed and wise decisions prior to sending sheep and goats for slaughter will help to maintain and strengthen the integrity of both industries.

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## Cache Valley Virus

Cache Valley virus (CVV) was detected in Ontario flocks during the last week of December 2015 and the start of 2016. CVV was also detected in Quebec flocks. CVV is a mosquito borne virus that causes developmental damage to the fetus’s central nervous system and musculoskeletal system when the pregnant ewe is infected before 48 days of gestation, resulting in stillborn and aborted lambs with unusual and severe birth defects. Goat fetuses may also be affected by CVV but to-date, no affected goat kids have been reported in Ontario.

Typically, deformed lambs are born in late December and early January – reflecting that the infection occurred approximately 3 to 4 months earlier (August to October) when ewes were in early gestation. Lambs born after this are usually unaffected because mosquito populations are decreased or killed by cold weather in late October and November. This year’s warm fall may have allowed mosquitoes to survive for a longer period of time.

It is unknown whether CVV will be a problem this year. If your flock/herd experiences birth defects in lambs/kids, call your veterinarian so that a diagnosis can be made. If CVV is detected, information will be shared with the sheep and goat industries, as well as veterinarians in the province.

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