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NSW DEPARTMENT OF  
PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

## Goat health—lice

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(Reviewed JT Seaman,

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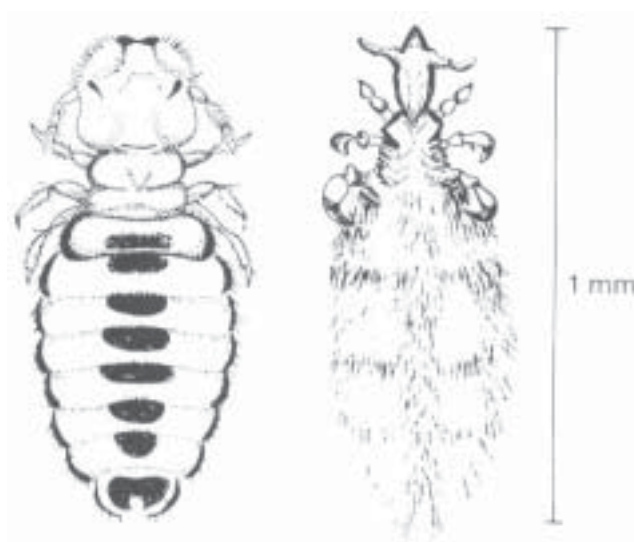
The extent of losses from external parasites in goats is difficult to determine. Certainly the most prevalent external parasites of goats are lice.

### TYPES

There are two types of lice affecting goats in New South Wales: the biting louse (*Damalinia caprae*) and the sucking louse (*Linognathus stenopsis*). These lice are small (only 1 to 2 mm long) and are grey or cream in colour.

*Damalinia caprae*

*Linognathus stenopsis*



### HOST SPECIFIC

Goat lice affect only goats. They may survive on sheep for about 5 to 7 days, but not propagate. Lice from cattle do not affect goats.

Lice from sheep (*Damalinia ovis*) have been found in recent experiments in Victoria to both persist and reproduce on goats. Goats must therefore be considered as a possible source of reinfection of sheep where both are grazing in close proximity.

### SIGNS

Infestation with lice results in considerable damage to the skin or fleece because infected animals bite and scratch and rub against fences, trees and other objects. Biting lice feed on skin and scurf. Sucking lice cause more severe damage as they puncture the skin and suck blood and tissue fluids. Raw and scabby areas may develop on the skin. Heavy infestations with sucking lice can result in anaemia.

The goat is left in a ragged appearance, with dull coat and loss of body condition. There is often a characteristic odour, especially in humid weather.

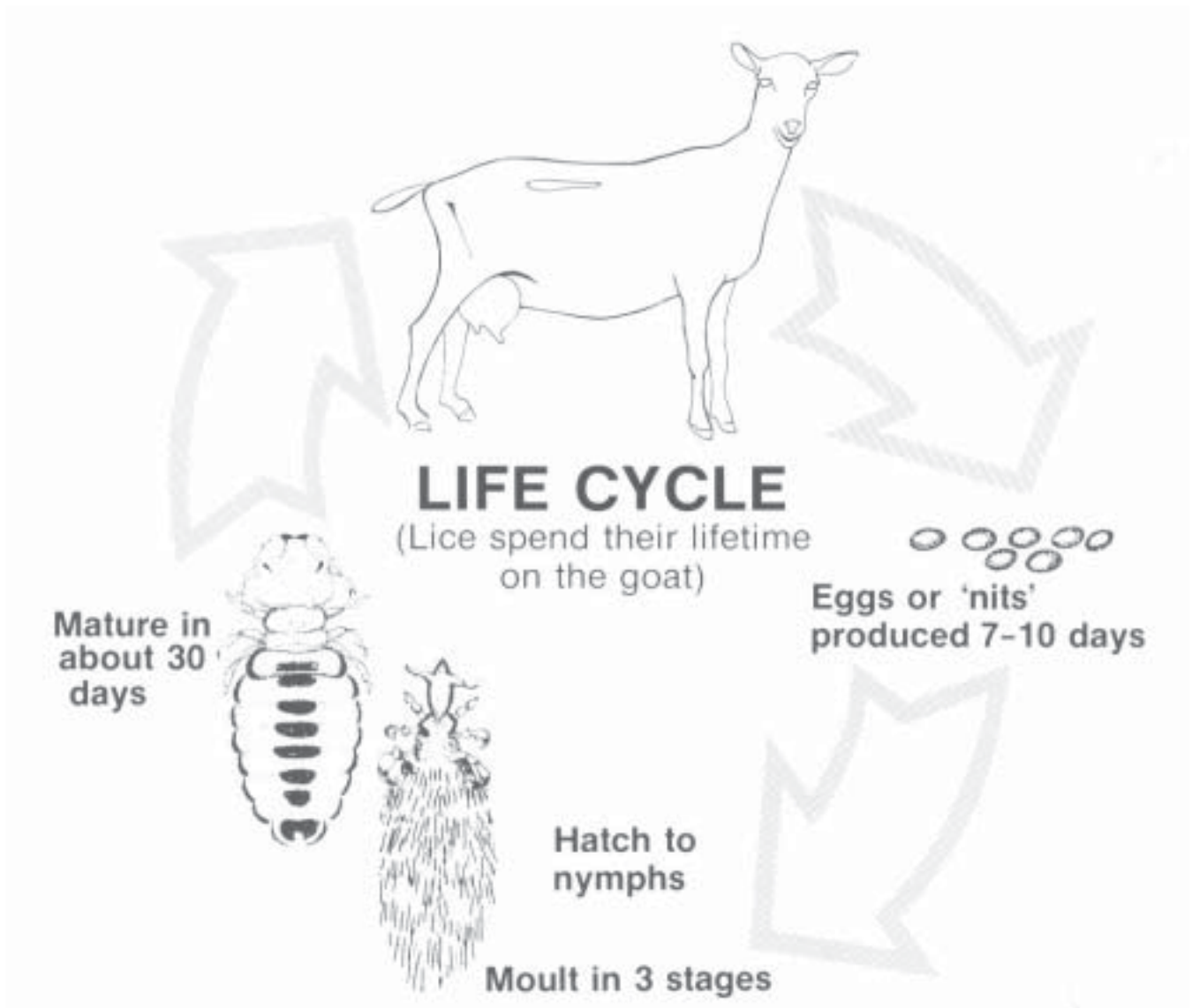
### LIFE CYCLE

Lice spend their whole life on the goat. Individual adult lice survive for about a month.

### SPREAD

The spread of lice is by direct contact between goats. Crowded conditions for goats enable rapid spread. At shows, spread can occur with shared grooming equipment, stalls or trailers.

Lice survive only a couple of days in the environment. Eggs removed from the goat are unlikely to hatch.



## SEASON

Infestations occur mostly in cooler months. Goats in poorer condition with a long hair-coat and on lower quality feed are most susceptible. The heavy burdens build up during autumn and early winter.

## TREATMENT

All goats should be treated with an insecticide that kills lice. For a thorough kill, the insecticide must contact all lice.

A second treatment in about 2 weeks is necessary to kill lice hatched from the eggs present at the first treatment.

The yards, stalls and equipment should be treated or the goats isolated from them for 4 days.

Keep newly introduced goats isolated until after two treatments.

## EFFECTIVE CHEMICALS

Diazinon dips or sprays are registered for treatment of lice in goats. Repeat as necessary according to label directions. Some powder preparations are also available for use on individual goats in small herds.

Follow the manufacturer's recommendations concerning mixing rates and application precautions. Wear protective clothing and gloves.

A pour-on application of deltamethrin (Clout-S®) is registered for use on goats. This is applied at a dose rate of 2 mL/ 10 kg with an approved applicator as a long stripe along the backline of goats. There is no requirement to shear goats before treatment. This provides a period of protection against re-infestation and establishment of biting and sucking lice. It is not suitable for use on lactating goats when the milk is intended for human consumption.

Emphasis is placed on the treatment of every goat

and incorporation of management procedures to prevent re-infestation. This includes contact with bucks, other goats at shows or goats from adjacent paddocks or properties which have not been treated.

## **TOXICITY PRECAUTIONS**

All insecticidal preparations can be toxic if not used correctly.

- Do not treat goats in damp weather or if rain is expected within 24 hours.
- Do not treat hot, thirsty goats or They may absorb the solution through the skin or even drink it.
- Follow the manufacturer's recommendations.

## **SELF-LIMITING**

Lice are usually a self-limiting infestation. Well-fed goats in good general health will carry very few lice. Infested goats will shrug off infestation when their condition improves, usually with a rising plane of nutrition in early spring.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

For further information, contact your veterinary practitioner or the NSW Department of Primary Industries.

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### **DISCLAIMER**

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of review (August 2004). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the NSW Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.

### **ALWAYS READ THE LABEL**

Users of agricultural chemical products must always read the label and strictly comply with directions on the label. Users are not absolved from compliance with the directions on the label by reason of any statement made, or omitted to be made, in this publication.