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NSW DEPARTMENT OF
PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

Goat health— tetanus

Agfact A7.9.2, third edition 2004

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CAUSE

Goats are very susceptible to tetanus. Tetanus is caused by a toxin produced by the bacterium *Clostridium tetani*. These bacteria live in the soil, in faeces and in dust on the goat's skin. When a penetrating wound occurs, tetanus bacteria may multiply in the wound and produce a powerful toxin.

Puncture wounds caused by nails, wire, dog bites, grass seeds, or cuts from castration, dehorning, hoof trimming or surgical operations can result in tetanus infection. Difficult kiddings may bruise the kid and set up tetanus.

SIGNS OF TETANUS

Tetanus toxin affects the brain and nervous system producing the following clinical signs:

- stiff limbs and tail
- jaws clamped together (lockjaw)
- saliva drooling from mouth
- pricked ears
- third eyelid prolapsed across the eye
- eventually rigid paralysis and death in about 2 days.

The signs appear from a week up to 3 weeks from the time of infection. Kids showing tetanus from a difficult kidding develop signs at 7 to 10 days of age.

TREATMENT

Treatment is seldom successful, so the answer lies in prevention by vaccination.

Locate the wound if possible. Look for nail punctures in the hooves. Open the wound up and flush out with antiseptic.

Tetanus antitoxin is available commercially but is very expensive. Valuable animals may be treated by a veterinarian with high doses into the vein twice daily. The veterinarian would also treat the animal with high

doses of antibiotics injected into the muscle. Treatment is likely to be prolonged and very costly.

PREVENTION

All kids should receive two doses of vaccine:

- one at 6 to 8 weeks of age, and
- the second 4 to 6 weeks later.

Booster doses are recommended every 6 months.

Give previously vaccinated does their booster dose a month prior to kidding. This gives protection to the kids through the colostrum for 8 to 10 weeks.

Tetanus vaccination is usually given in conjunction with vaccine for other clostridial diseases such as enterotoxaemia (as 2-in-1 vaccine).

Undesired reactions

Some dramatic side effects may be seen with vaccinations in goats—anaphylactic shock can occur directly after the injection. The animal may fall down, gasping for breath and frothing at the mouth. These reactions often last only a short while, but occasionally the effects are fatal.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Consult your veterinary practitioner, RLPB veterinary inspector or the NSW Department of Primary Industries.

ISSN 0725-7759 Job No. 5081

DISCLAIMER

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of review (July 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.