

Goat Health - Tetanus

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Animal Biosecurity and Welfare, NSW DPI

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

Prevention

All kids should receive two doses of a multivalent clostridial vaccine including tetanus.

- one dose at 6 to 8 weeks of age, and

- the second dose 4 to 6 weeks later.

Booster doses are recommended annually.

Give previously vaccinated does a 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.

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.

More information

- Meat and Livestock Australia [clostridial diseases](#)
- Local Land Services, Tel: 1300 795 299
- To view details of your LLS region: <http://www.lls.nsw.gov.au/>
- Animal Biosecurity and Welfare, Tel: 1800 680 244
- Department of Primary Industries: biosecurity@dpi.nsw.gov.au

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