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Extension Extra

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Preventing Club Lamb Fungus

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“Club Lamb Fungus” is a disease caused by a fungus (*Trichophyton*) that infects the skin, resulting in circular scabby or dandruffy ringworm lesions. The fungus is able to live a long time in the environment on halters, shearing equipment, and sheep contact surfaces.

Club Lamb Fungus has become prevalent in show lambs. It can infect any sheep, but show lambs are particularly susceptible. Because it is contagious from lamb to lamb and because people can get the disease, it has become an important disease to watch for in show lambs.

What Does Club Lamb Fungus Look Like?

It can vary from light flaky scabs to thick crusty lesions. Typically they are round in shape and, although the lesions can be found anywhere, they are more common on haired regions such as the face and ears. Affected spots start small and expand to full size in 4-8 weeks, and usually require 8-16 weeks for spontaneous recovery. Lesions of lambs affected with club lamb fungus contain an abundance of the organism.

What Can I do to Prevent Club Lamb Fungus?

1. Since affected areas contain high amounts of the organism, affected lambs should be isolated from other sheep.

2. Since the fungus is hardy and fairly widespread in the environment, many sheep have contact with the fungus. If skin defenses are healthy the animals will not be affected with the disease.

3. The practice of frequent washing, grooming and "slick shearing" damages skin through small nicks and removal of lanolin. Lanolin, the natural body oil found on sheep, is thought to play a role in preventing the fungus from entering the skin. Damage of these important skin defenses **GREATLY** enhances the disease.

4. Minimize the amount of washing and shearing performed; clip and wash as late as possible so skin defenses are not compromised.

5. Do not share show equipment, stalls, water, or feed buckets. Disinfect shearing equipment between sheep.

6. Lambs that are exhibited should be housed separately from the farm flock to avoid introduction of the fungus to the farm flock.

7. Access to sunlight, and prevention of crowded, humid, dark conditions benefit skin health and help prevent Club Lamb Fungus.

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