

21<sup>st</sup> January 2012

## SHEEP FOOT ABSCESS

### Clinical signs

- Severe lameness non weight bearing.. Tippy toe gait affected leg and after stand on stand on rock or rough surface may lift leg and vigorously shake leg.
- Often a temporary improvement after exercise or muster to yards.
- Visually claw can appear absolutely normal particularly toe abscess , long standing cases and or heel abscess the foot is swollen and / or hoof distorted
- Pocket of pus and or scar tissue when trim foot unlike footrot.
- Squeezing affected claw causes a stronger pain response.



Diagram 1 on left

Toe abscess in lamb prior to trimming no swelling or heat evident, lamb acutely lame and affected claw elicited strong pain response when squeezed with foot parer handle. Yellow pus came out prior to photo. Note pus can often be grey and watery

Diagram 2 and 3 below

Severe long standing heel abscess



### Treatment

1. **Trim toe** to establish drainage of pocket of pus ensuring you cease paring if you draw any blood. It is not possible to trim a heel abscess normally.
2. **Bath** in dilute disinfectant, limited benefit on its own with antibiotic treatment
3. **Antibiotic therapy** main treatment for details see next page

## Antibiotic therapy contd.....

- Particularly rams in the 2 months prior to joining or during joining and late pregnant ewes with twins as foot abscess lead to deaths from pregnancy toxemia.
- Later you commence treatment after lameness first appears in rams, higher the risk cessation of fertile semen production.

## Effectiveness

- Bacteria involved nearly always sensitive to Penicillin (Pen) or Oxytetracycline (Oxytet)
- Pen kills the bacteria quicker than Oxytet
- Short acting (SA) formulations more effective than long acting (LA)
- Several brands of SA & LA formulations of both Pen and Oxytet
- All are schedule 4 products available by veterinary prescription only

## Meat WHP

- Pen SA 5 days & Pen LA 21 to 30 days
- Oxytet SA 14-15 days Oxytet LA 28-42 days

## Treatment Frequency

- Pen SA daily, Pen LA every 2 days
- Pen label claims of 3-4 day duration contentious author considers it is a maximum of 2 days and even then at lower blood levels than daily SA Pen
- Oxytet SA every 1-2 days Oxytet LA every 3- 5 days. (duration varies with formulations and dose rate used)
- Regardless of antibiotic used continue treatment until fully recovered. In cases picked up very early with minimal swelling 3 days of treatment sufficient,, whereas severe long standing cases may require several weeks of treatment

## Antibiotic general comments :

- Oxytet LA relatively irritant, maximum of 5ml per site in sheep , must given in neck to avoid carcass damage.
- Oxytet LA products have proven highly effective and more convenient than SA Pen. None the less valuable animals or rams immediately prior or during joining penicillin preferred if able to manage daily injections
- Regardless of product used check label WHP carefully as varies with different brands and discuss with prescribing vet dose rates and frequency of treatment
- **Oxytet La we normally prescribe is Alamycin LA at 1ml per 10 kg meat WHP 35 days and single treatment duration 5 days**

## Foot Abscess Prevention

- Avoid condition score 4+ as excess weight increases risk.
- Foot bathe after prolonged period on rough hard surface for e.g. post transport or shearing.
- In last 2 months before shearing, run rams in a paddock that is very convenient to check for signs of lameness daily. So can treat promptly.

### Disclaimer

This publication may be of assistance to you but Livestock logic and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication