

Sexually Transmitted Disease Guide

BRUCELLA OVIS

Eradication Program Options

PLAN A (rapid clean up):

1. Palpate and blood test all rams every 2 months, until 2 negative flock tests are obtained. An excellent time to begin is 1 to 2 months after the breeding season. Cull all positive rams.
2. Palpate and blood test annually for surveillance purposes.
3. Semen test all rams 1-2 months prebreeding. (Optional)

PLAN B:

1. Cull all resident rams.
2. Replace with virgin rams that have tested negative.

PLAN C (long-term):

1. Palpate, blood test, and semen test all rams prebreeding, and cull those that are positive on any of the tests or have poor semen quality.
2. Palpate and blood test post-breeding.



Disease Prevention Checklist for Rams

- Isolate the rams used for breeding
- Palpate, blood test, and cull positive/suspected rams
- Protect clean rams by separation and testing
- Purchase only virgin rams
- Conduct semen evaluation



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PROTECT YOUR LIVESTOCK NOW!

Detecting and managing sexually transmitted (venereal) disease can be difficult and counter-productive. This second part of the livestock venereal disease guide compiled by the Meat Board of Namibia with the support of the Agricultural Unions, could help producers to identify whether venereal disease is affecting the breeding potential of their herds.



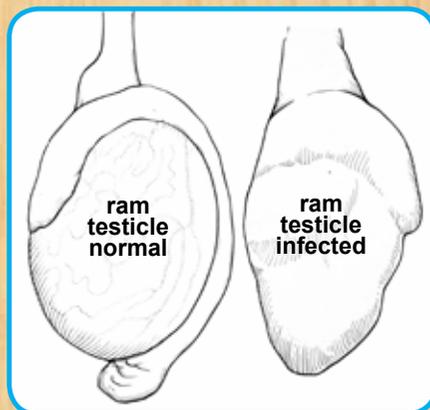
**Meat Board
of Namibia**

Background

Brucella ovis or Ovine Epididymitis is a venereal disease of rams which is caused by a contagious bacterial infection. The infection causes inflammation of the testes and the epididymis and reduces fertility of the ram. Infection of ewes can sometimes lead to abortion and early death of lambs. Investigations into the occurrence of *brucella ovis* in the south of Namibia showed alarming high rates of infection amongst sheep herds. These figures will have an extensive effect on herd fertility in general. *Brucella ovis* causes considerable economic losses due to increased culling of rams, reduced lamb percentages and extended lambing seasons. Producers should take this disease serious and act diligently to clean their herds.

Transmission

Brucella ovis is transmitted from rams to ewes during mating. Rams are carriers of the disease and could transmit the bacterium through semen for an extended period. Ewes will carry this organism in the vagina for at least two months after being mated by an infected ram and act as mechanical vectors, thereby facilitating ram to ram infection. If ewes are kept separate from infected rams, they will rid themselves of the infection. This bacterium can also be transmitted from ram to ram when rams are gathered closely and the bacterium is taken in orally through water and feed.



Clinical

Ewes come into heat repeatedly. Rams develop a permanent infection of the epididymis and the testes. The testes of the ram could become smaller in size or the epididymis could become grossly enlarged. Abnormalities can be detected in the testes when palpated, but some rams may not show any clinical signs. Ewes may abort and lambs are very often weak and will die shortly after birth. The biggest effect is however on herd fertility with a low conception rate and low lambing percentage.

Diagnosis

Methods to diagnose *Brucella ovis* are physical examination of the testes and epididymis for abnormalities. As this is not always accurate, additional tests should be done such as blood tests and semen cultures. Rams that tested positive must be removed from the herd and the rest of the rams must be tested again within four to six months. This process must be repeated until the herd is clean.

Treatment and control

There is no practical guaranteed treatment. Vaccination Rev 1 is available for infant rams between the ages of two and four months. Control of the disease includes management practices such as rearing the infant rams separate from the adult rams and introduction of only certified clean rams into the herd. If new rams are bought, keep them apart from the herd until a laboratory test confirmed that they are clean. All rams should be examined and tested at least once before mating. If new ewes are brought into the herd, keep them separate from rams for at least three to four months. Producers should act responsible when removing infected rams from the herd. If you sell to an auction, make sure the auctioneer knows the status of the rams. To completely clean a herd will not happen overnight!



swollen and enlarged testicle in a ram with brucella ovis.

For more information on venereal livestock diseases and how to protect your livestock effectively, please contact your nearest state or private veterinarian.