



The WeCAHN Small Ruminants Network held a quarterly videoconference meeting on February 19th, 2026. The network members discussed the animal health events from October to December 2025. Veterinary practitioners, diagnosticians, veterinary college faculty, researchers, and industry representatives attended the meeting.

1) Overview

1. Clinical Impressions Surveys completed by network practitioners.
2. Data shared by western veterinary diagnostic laboratories: Manitoba Veterinary Diagnostic Services (VDS) laboratory, Prairie Diagnostic Services (PDS) laboratory, and University of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Services Unit (UCVM DSU).
3. Scan: small ruminant surveillance reported by other sources or networks.

2) Interesting Cases

Case study: Sudden deaths in pasture lambs

- A group of young lambs on pasture in coastal British Columbia died suddenly after showing inactivity and diarrhea.
- Post-mortem exams showed fluid in the lungs and signs of severe infection.
- Testing confirmed heavy growth of *Bibersteinia trehalosi*, causing bloodstream infection (septicemia).
- This type of outbreak is unusual in pasture lambs and may be linked to cold, wet, and windy conditions.
- Nutritional issues, especially low copper levels, should be also be considered and investigated.



Case study: Severe pneumonia and sudden death in feedlot lambs

- Recently purchased lambs developed weakness and sudden deaths three weeks after arrival.
- Animals showed severe respiratory signs and some had signs of whole-body illness and poor condition.
- Testing found multiple infections, including *Mannheimia haemolytica*, *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae*, and *B. trehalosi*, along with viruses.
- Low iron and marginal copper levels were common in affected lambs.
- Stress from mixing animals from unknown origins and underlying nutrition issues likely increased disease risk.
- Regular mineral testing and working with a nutritionist are important to help prevent similar problems.



3) Syndromic Surveillance

Important information:

Clinical impression surveys

Never; **Rarely** = 1-2 times per 3 months; **Commonly** = 1-2 times per month; **Very frequently** = 3+ times per month.

'Control charts'

Control charts are a simple way of presenting data collected over time (e.g., increasing or decreasing detection frequencies). Each data point reflects the number of positive samples or cases reported by a diagnostic laboratory over 3 months (quarter of a year). The upper and lower horizontal lines are called control limits. Individual points lying outside the control limits suggest a need for investigation to determine whether/how significant a signal they represent.

- **Respiratory disease** was reported **never** to **rarely**, with key pathogens including *Mannheimia haemolytica*, *Bibersteinia trehalosi*, and *Trueperella pyogenes*, and trends remained **stable**. Laboratory findings showed two detections of caprine arthritis encephalitis virus (CAE) in goats at PDS, no ovine progressive pneumonia (OPP) detections, and sporadic pneumonia cases in sheep and goats with cultures confirming *B. trehalosi*, *M. haemolytica*, *T. pyogenes*, and *Streptococcus ovis*. All findings were within expected levels.
- **Digestive disease** was reported **never** to **rarely**, with trends stable. MAP (Johne's disease) serology in goats and sheep remained within control limits, PCR detections were low. UCVN DSU reported rumenitis, necrotic enteritis, and colitis in sheep, and PDS diagnosed isolated cases of hepatitis, including a rare parasitic hepatitis.
- **Reproductive disease**, including abortions and mastitis, was reported **never** to **rarely**, with trends **stable**. UCVN DSU and PDS reported isolated goat and sheep abortions with no definitive cause. Mastitis in dairy goats identified *Bacillus pumilus*, *M. haemolytica*, *S. equorum*, *S. aureus*, and other *Staphylococcus* spp., all within expected levels.



- **Musculoskeletal disease** was reported **never** to **rarely**, with trends **stable**. Diagnoses included emaciation, starvation, and cachexia (extreme weight loss conditions) in sheep and goats.
- **Neurological disease** was reported **never** to **rarely**, remaining **stable**. Laboratory findings included listeriosis in sheep, polio in a goat, and sporadic encephalitis (brain inflammation) cases with *B. trehalosi*.
- **Dermatological disease** was reported **never** to **rarely**, with **stable** trends. A goat abscess yielded mixed bacterial growth consistent with opportunistic infections.
- **Cardiovascular disease** was reported **never** to **rarely**, with isolated cases of cardiac tamponade in sheep associated with chronic conditions.
- **Multisystemic disease** was reported **never**, remaining **stable**. Laboratory cultures confirmed caseous lymphadenitis (CL) in sheep and goats and sporadic septicemia cases in sheep, including two involving *B. trehalosi*.
- **Urinary disease** was reported **never** to **rarely**, with isolated end-stage kidney disease in a meat sheep.

Overall, clinical impressions and laboratory results indicate low occurrence of disease across body systems, with sporadic bacterial and viral detections remaining within expected limits and stable trends.

4) Emerging diseases and other network updates

Update from CAHSS small ruminant network meeting January 2025

- Ontario slaughterhouses reported more cases of *C. ovis* in lambs from Western Canada, highlighting the ongoing need for producer awareness.
- Control of *Taenia ovis*, the worm form of *C. ovis*, relies on regular **dog deworming** as part of flock management. Alberta Lamb provides educational resources including a [factsheet](#) and a comprehensive manual ([Health module](#)).

Bovine theileriosis in Ontario

- In November 2025 two cases were detected in dairy cows on the same farm: one US- imported and one likely infected on farm, raising concern for tick-borne disease despite Canada being free of long-horned ticks.
- CAHSS offers preparedness resources for theileriosis and the long horn tick, including a [webinar](#), vector-borne disease [webpage](#), tick identification tool ([e-tick](#)), and [VECTOR](#) library
- Sheep may act as carriers of *Theileria orientalis* Ikeda, the parasite that causes bovine theileriosis, emphasizing importance of biosecurity and vector awareness.

Sheep pox and goat pox

- Pox continue to spread in Europe, with highest activity in Greece and ongoing movement into Bulgaria, Romania, North Macedonia, and Serbia, creating transboundary disease risk and potential trade implications (LINK; [The Fence Post](#)).



Avian Influenza H5N1

- In Canada, **no** HPAI H5N1 has been detected in dairy cattle, but poultry outbreaks continue. In the US, no new dairy cases were reported in January but poultry outbreaks persist. Human cases in the US remain at 71, most cases related to contact with infected cows or poultry indicating zoonotic and occupational risk
- H5N1 antibodies were found in milk from a cow in the Netherlands after investigation of sick and dead barn cats. This first report outside the US suggests possible cross-species transmission ([Cohen, J., Science, 2026](#)).
- Severe H5N1 infections in cats in Poland, often linked to raw poultry diets, progressed rapidly with respiratory and neurological signs, and all affected cats died within three days. Contact your veterinarian in case of sudden deaths or severe illness in cats.

National Farm Animal Care Council

- The Council is reviewing the – [Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep](#), with public consultation planned for July 2026 and final publication expected in late 2026 or early 2027.
- Revisions focus on streamlining content. Consultation on new born euthanasia methods and practical challenges emphasize proper use and training for captive bolt euthanasia and avoiding unacceptable practices such as passive neglect (letting them pass).





Producer takeaways

- Some respiratory outbreaks in lambs can be severe and unusual, with rapid deaths caused by *Bibersteinia trehalosi* and coinfections with *Mannheimia haemolytica*, so broad testing and careful diagnosis are important.
- Low or marginal copper remains a key risk for disease, making regular mineral testing and working with a nutritionist essential for flock health.
- Common diseases like caseous lymphadenitis, listeriosis, and Johne's disease are still present at low levels, so ongoing monitoring and routine checks are needed. Dog deworming remains vital to prevent carcass condemnations at slaughter.
- Awareness of emerging risks such as bovine theileriosis, sheep and goat pox, and avian influenza require vigilance.
- Updates to the sheep Code of Practice will focus on proper euthanasia methods and training for captive bolt use to ensure safe handling of lambs and kids.

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