Western Canadian Animal Health Network

WECAHN SMALL RUMINANTS NETWORK PRODUCER SUMMARY

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2025

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. Data were synthesized from clinical impression surveys completed by practitioners and laboratory submissions from Prairie Diagnostic Services (PDS), Manitoba Veterinary Diagnostic Services (VDS), and the University of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Services Unit (UCVM DSU).

1) Interesting Cases

Septicemic pasteurellosis in pasture lambs

Ten unvaccinated Cheviot lambs in coastal British Columbia died suddenly with inactivity and diarrhea. Necropsy and lab testing identified *Bibersteinia trehalosi* in the lungs and spleen. Environmental stress (cold, wet and windy weather) and potential copper deficiency may have contributed. Moving the flock and improving nutrition helped prevent further losses.

Severe respiratory disease with coinfection

Suffolk cross lambs in a feedlot developed sudden weakness and deaths three weeks after arrival, showing respiratory signs. Lab results found multiple bacteria including *B. trehalosi* and *Mannheimia haemolytica*, along with viral agents. Nutritional deficiencies, particularly low copper, were noted. Stress from mixing flocks of unknown origin likely worsened disease severity. Mineral testing, nutritional analysis and careful flock management are important.

2) Syndromic and Laboratory Surveillance

Respiratory disease remained **never to rare**, with occasional bacterial pneumonia and pleuritis reported in sheep and goats. Key pathogens included *B. trehalosi, M. haemolytica* and *T. pyogenes*, with trends **stable**. CAE cases in goats were minimal, and no OPP in sheep or *M. ovi* cases were identified.

Digestive disease remained **never to rare**, with sporadic cases of rumenitis, colitis, and necrotic enteritis in lambs. *Clostridium perfringens* type C, Johne's disease and parasitic hepatitis were detected, all within expected levels, and trends were **stable**.

Reproductive issues, including abortions and mastitis, were **never to rare**, with occasional bacterial identified such as *S. aureus, S. equorum*, and others, all remaining within normal levels.

Musculoskeletal disease was seen **never to rare**, with sporadic emaciation, and starvation in sheep and goats, showing no trend of increase.

Neurological disease was seen **never to rare**, with isolated listeriosis and polio cases, as well as one encephalitis associated with *B. trehalosi*. Trends remained stable.

Dermatological disease was seen **never to rare**, with occasional abscesses.

Cardiovascular issues were seen **never to rare**, with isolated cardiac tamponade reported.

Multisystemic disease with sporadic caseous lymphadenitis (CL) and septicemia in sheep and goats remaining within expected levels.

Urinary disease was **never to rare**, with an isolated case of kidney disease reported.

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.

3) Emerging diseases and other network updates

Cysticercus ovis

Ontario slaughterhouses reported more cases of *C. ovis* linked to lambs from Western Canada. This parasite continues to be a persistent issue, and controlling it requires regular **dog deworming** and careful flock management. Producers are encouraged to review available resources and educational materials to prevent spread. factsheet and Health module.

Bovine theileriosis and long-horned tick

Two cases were identified in Ontario dairy cows in November, including one likely on-farm transmission. No long horned ticks have been detected in Canada. Producers should stay alert and follow recommended surveillance and tick-prevention practices.

Sheep pox and goat pox

High levels of disease transmission continue in Greece and are spreading into Bulgaria, Romania, North Macedonia, and Serbia. This expanding range increases the risk of disease entering new regions and affecting trade.

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 in North America

No HPAI has been detected in Canadian dairy cattle, but poultry outbreaks persist. In the US, poultry outbreaks continue, with no new dairy cases in January.

HPAI in Europe

ere detected in a cow in the Netherlands, with sick and dead cats on the same farm, suggesting possible cross-species transmission. Producers should monitor for sudden and severe illness in cats.

HPAI in cats

Severe H5N1 infection in cats shows as a rapidly progressing disease with high mortality. Producers should avoid feeding raw poultry to pets and minimize contact with potentially infected birds.

Sheep Code of Practice updates

Public consultation is planned for mid-2026, with publication expected late 2026 or early 2027. Updates include proper euthanasia techniques, particularly in new borns, and the importance of training techniques for proper procedures. Producers and veterinary teams should prepare to follow revised guidelines.

Producer takeaways

- Some respiratory outbreaks in lambs can be severe and unusual, with rapid deaths caused by *B. trehalosi* and coinfections with *M. 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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