



The WeCAHN Small Ruminants Network held a quarterly videoconference meeting on November 20th, 2025 to discuss animal health events occurring from July to September with veterinary practitioners, diagnosticians, veterinary college faculty, researchers, and industry representatives.

1) Overview

1. Clinical Impressions Survey 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: Malignant catarrhal fever in a lamb

- Three sheep in a 20-head flock became ill, and a four-month-old lamb showed breathing difficulty and stopped eating before dying.
- Examination of tissues showed widespread blood vessel damage affecting several organs, which pointed to a whole-body viral disease.
- Testing confirmed ovine herpesvirus-2 (OvHV-2) as the most likely cause of death, even though sheep usually carry this virus without signs.
- *E. coli* was found in the lung, but it was not considered the cause of disease and was likely contamination from the field necropsy.
- This case shows that sheep can develop severe disease from OvHV-2 (Malignant Catarrhal Fever, MCF) and it should be considered when sudden deaths occur.

Case study: Urinary blockage caused by silica stones in a ram

- A six-year-old ram developed a complete urinary blockage caused by a stone made entirely of silica. The ram was fed only grass hay and had no obvious access to soil or other sources of silica.
- Although most urinary stones in sheep are linked to grain feeding, silica stones can occur sporadically on forage-based diets. Similar cases have been reported in grass-fed cattle and small ruminants, likely related to plants with higher silica content.
- In feedlot lambs, urinary blockages (leading to “water belly”) are typically managed with dietary adjustments and water availability; unlike in cattle, surgical treatment in lambs is rarely cost-effective, and euthanasia is often chosen.
- This case highlights the value of stone analysis and awareness that forage-only diets can still pose a risk for urinary blockage.



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 system disease

- Respiratory disease in small ruminants was reported **never** to **rarely**, including rhinitis, pneumonia, pleuritis, and pulmonary edema.
- Key pathogens for pneumonia include *Bibersteinia trehalosi*, *Mannheimia haemolytica*, *Pasteurella multocida*, *Histophilus somni*, *Mycoplasma* spp., *M. ovipneumoniae*, *M. arginini*, and parainfluenza virus 3; trends were **stable**.
- Other respiratory conditions were reported **never** to **rarely**.

Laboratory findings: At PDS, no lentiviruses were detected in goats or sheep. *M. ovipneumoniae* was detected in two sheep; no detections in goats. Cultures of *M. haemolytica* and *B. trehalosi* in sheep and goats were within control limits. UCVN DSU reported bacterial bronchopneumonia in a few goats with *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, *Proteus hauseri*, and *Morganella morganii*. Aspiration pneumonia and pleuritis cases were within expected limits.

Bronchopneumonia cases were reported at UCVN DSU and VDS, and aspiration pneumonia diagnoses increased but remained within control limits.



Digestive system disease

- Digestive disorders were reported **Never** to **Rarely**, with diarrhea and gastrointestinal parasites being the most common.
- Key pathogens included *E. coli*, *Clostridia*, *Coccidia*, *Cryptosporidia*, and liver flukes; trends were **stable**.

Laboratory findings: One PCR-positive case of *Mycobacterium avium* subsp. *paratuberculosis* (MAP) in sheep; serology and PCR in goats were within control limits. *Corynebacterium pseudotuberculosis* detected in single cases in sheep and goats. Cases of rumenitis and enteritis in goats and sheep included *E. coli* and *Clostridium perfringens*. One sheep had very high *Eimeria* and strongyle egg counts. Two hepatitis cases were reported in sheep.



Reproductive system disease, including mastitis

- Reproductive disorders, including abortions, uterine, ovarian, and male reproductive diseases, were reported **Never** to **Rarely**. Causes of infertility were **stable**.

Laboratory findings: No abortions detected in goats or sheep. No positive tests for *Neospora caninum*, *Chlamydia abortus*, or *Coxiella burnetii*.

Musculoskeletal system disease

- Musculoskeletal issues were reported **Never** to **Rarely**. Arthritis was **stable** and foot rot **decreasing**.

Laboratory findings: Three cases of muscle wasting in sheep were reported at PDS.

Congenital disease

- Congenital disorders were reported **Never** to **Rarely**, including arthrogryposis, atresia, cataracts, hydrocephalus, and hernias.

Neurological system disease

- Neurological disease was reported **Never** to **Rarely**, including blindness, seizures, paralysis, and polioencephalomalacia ("polio").

Laboratory findings: Polioencephalomalacia cases in sheep were within control limits. A single case of listeriosis (*Listeria monocytogenes*) was reported.

Dermatological disease

Skin and parasite issues were reported **Never** to **Rarely**, including lice, mange, and keds; trends were **stable**.



Trauma, injury, or welfare-related issue

- Trauma and welfare-related issues were reported **Never** to **Rarely**. Emaciation was **Never** reported.

Multisystemic disease

- Multisystemic disease, including anemia, caseous lymphadenitis (CL), and nutritional deficiencies, were reported **Never** to **Rarely**. Copper and vitamin A deficiencies were **stable** to slightly increasing.

Laboratory findings: *C. pseudotuberculosis* were detected in goats and sheep within control limits. Septicemia cases in sheep included *T. pyogenes*, *B. trehalosi*, *E. coli*, and *S. infantarius*, all within control limits.

Urinary system disease

- Urinary disease, including pyelonephritis (kidney infection) and urolithiasis (kidney stones), was reported **Never** to **Rarely**.

Laboratory findings: One case of renal tubular necrosis in sheep was diagnosed.

Mastitis

- Acute and chronic mastitis were reported **Never** to **Rarely**.

Laboratory findings: *S. xylosus* and other *Staphylococcus* species were cultured from goat milk samples at PDS and UCVM DSU, with moderate growth noted in one case.

4) Scan of Emerging and International Issues

Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) – British Columbia

- Nearly 100 deer died in the Grand Forks area, marking the first confirmed EHD event in BC since 1988 ([CBC](#)).
- Some bighorn sheep were also affected, and a domestic sheep producer reported losses with concern for bluetongue, but no samples were tested.
- Vectors and environmental conditions are similar between EHD and bluetongue raising concerns among sheep producers in the area. No bluetongue cases have been detected in BC since 2021.
- Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) testing was not performed due to a public service strike, however, rapid, high-mortality events are considered inconsistent with CWD.

Stable Fly Activity – Quebec vs. Western Provinces

- Quebec reported increased dermatological lesions and lamb losses linked to stable fly activity, peaking in August.
- Western provinces experienced a shorter, abrupt fly season with limited impact, attributed to regional weather patterns including early wet summer followed by favorable August conditions.
- Eastern regions had prolonged drought until September–October, contributing to higher fly-related impacts.

Bovine Theileriosis – Ontario Dairy Cow

- *Theileria orientalis* genotype Ikeda, the blood parasite that causes theileriosis, was confirmed in a dairy show cow in Kawartha Lakes, Ontario, the first known case in Canada.
- The cow, imported from Illinois, US, developed regenerative anemia, has clinically recovered, and is a lifelong carrier.
- The Asian longhorned tick, a vector of theileriosis, has not been detected in Canada, and CFIA inspections found no ticks on the premises.
- Producers are advised to monitor vector exposure. Canadian resources include [e-tick](#), the Canadian Animal Health Surveillance System [vector-borne diseases](#) webpage, [Illinois Extension](#) information, and the [VECTOR](#) library.

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 – Canada and North America

- No HPAI infections have been detected in Canadian cattle; CFIA has tested 6,643 raw milk samples with all negative results ([LINK](#)).
- Poultry cases in Canada started earlier than usual, affecting multiple provinces and heavily impacting commercial operations in BC and Alberta ([CFIA](#)).
- In the U.S., one new dairy herd case in Idaho raised the total to 1,082 confirmed cases across 18 states, with bulk tank surveillance ongoing ([USDA-APHIS](#), [LINK](#)).
- Experimental studies show HPAI H5N1 from dairy cows and birds cause severe mastitis in lactating goats, with transmission to suckling kids and marked milk quality and production declines.



Contagious Nodular Dermatitis (Lumpy Skin Disease) – Europe

- Lumpy skin disease, a viral insect-transmitted cattle disease, is spreading westward in Europe with first confirmed cases in Italy and France in June 2025 and Spain in October 2025 (WAHIS, [Merck](#)).
- The disease causes nodular skin lesions and occasional mortality and has historically been present in Africa and more recently in the Middle East, Balkans, and Asia.
- CFIA issued import restrictions on susceptible animals and products from affected regions, along with a [Notice to Industry](#) and a [Fact Sheet](#).
- Sheep and goat pox virus has been spreading similarly. Potential risks for sheep and goat producers in the UK are explained: [Great Britain](#).

5) Research Updates

University of Calgary Scrapie research project

University of Calgary conducting research project on economics and awareness of scrapie among Canadian small ruminant producers.



Are you a Sheep/Goat Producer?

The University of Calgary and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) are seeking to understand the economics of small ruminant production and the current awareness of scrapie among Canadian producers.



https://survey.ucalgary.ca/jfe/form/SV_aUWTiwQJld1xzVQ

Canadian Food Inspection Agency

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- An Alberta provincial veterinarian engaged with Alberta Lamb Producers to raise awareness of Scrapie testing, but producer participation in the Alberta Scrapie Surveillance Program remains extremely low.
- Historical CFIA responses, including whole-flock culling and seven-year quarantines, continue to influence producer reluctance despite regulatory changes.
- The current CFIA framework uses genotyping to target highly susceptible QQ genotype animals for testing and euthanasia, while sparing QR and RR animals if QQ animals are negative. Trace-in and trace-out investigations are conducted as needed.
- Enrollment into the scrapie eradication program is poor due to genetically restrictive requirements and practical challenges, limiting voluntary producer participation.
- International trade implications include EU acceptance of Canadian goat genetics based on genotyping, though regulatory discrepancies over recognized resistant alleles complicate health certificate approvals.
- Clear and consistent communication with producers is essential to differentiate current protocols from historical practices and encourage participation in surveillance to protect animal health and market access.



Producer Takeaways

- Overall, disease levels in sheep and goats are as expected, but occasional cases like listeriosis and septicemia show the importance of testing sick animals to understand what's happening.
- Recent events, such as EHD in BC deer and stable fly-related lamb losses in Quebec, show how weather and location can quickly change disease risks.
- Avian influenza H5N1 can cause severe mastitis in goats and spread to nursing kids, highlighting the need for good biosecurity and awareness of diseases that can affect multiple species.
- Few producers participate in Scrapie testing even though control programs have evolved. Talk to your veterinarian about the current genotype-based scrapie control program.

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