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Sore Mouth

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in

Lambs and Kids

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Sore Mouth in Lambs and Kids

Sore mouth, or contagious ecthyma, is a disease of sheep and goats caused by a virus. The organism is too small to be seen with an ordinary microscope. The virus probably gains entrance to the affected parts through small cuts and scratches in the membranes of the mouth and exposed surfaces of the skin.

The disease usually appears when the lambs or kids are a few days to a few weeks of age, and, if secondary infection does not take place affected parts heal in from 18 to 25 days. The characteristic lesions are the blisters and scabs that appear, usually on the legs and udders of the older sheep. When the blisters rupture scabs are formed. These are black because of hemorrhage which has occurred.

Medicinal treatment is not very satisfactory. Some sheep men have reported good results from the use of straight sheep dip following removal of the scabs. It is claimed that the use of a vaccine not only will shorten the course of the disease, but will produce an immunity of considerable duration — just how long is not definitely known.

A live virus is used in vaccination, so it is not recommended where the disease has not existed. This is because scabs from the “takes” produced by the vaccination could contain virus that might exist through the year.

It is generally recommended that vaccine be used only in flocks where the disease has appeared year after year or in flocks newly affected, with the idea of shortening the course of the disease. Usually the vaccine is applied to scratches made to the bare insides of the thigh. Vaccine for sore mouth can be obtained from your local veterinarian.

On ranches where sore mouth has occurred regularly it is advisable to vaccinate the lambs

or kids. The most convenient time for many ranchers is when docking and castrating are done.

Since human beings are susceptible to the sore mouth virus care should be taken to wash thoroughly and treat all cuts and scratches on the hands after handling infected animals or the vaccine.