

Ask A Vet: Fall Deworming Time

Sunday, September 21, 2014

Dear Dr. Weldy's,

I have heard of dozens of ways to do a deworming program in my goat herd and this seems to get me more confused. Do you have a recommendation based on facts?

-Burdened with Parasites

Dear Burdened,

This is an excellent question going into the fall as this is when most deworming is implemented in sheep and goats before breeding. It has been a very common practice to recommend rotational deworming which means to rotate a different wormer about every 6-8 weeks. This is an old school practice I personally have been guilty of. What we have come to find out is that not every animal needs to be dewormed so often. With the consumer becoming more aware of overuse of antibiotics and possible drug resistance, we also are finding this to be a problem with dewormers as well and resistance by the parasite we wish to control.

We recommend doing fecal egg counts to assess parasite load or how heavy the animals and or pasture is contaminated with parasites (worms). We will have you collect samples in a plastic bag and store it in a refrigerator or cooler until can be delivered to the veterinarian's office. Through a process of mixing the known amount of fecal sample with a special solution, we are able to float the eggs to the top of a tube. We then do a visual count of the eggs under the microscope with a grid and quantify the number of eggs per gram of fecal material. This diagnostic tool aids us in determining a good parasite program for your herd. To determine the amount tested, use the following guidelines: if fewer than 10 goats, sample all; in herds up to 50 sample 10-15; in herds up to 100, sample 20-25. You will want to use the same goats throughout the year and sample every 8 weeks for a total of 6 times.

We use a FAMACHA chart to classify the animals into categories for treatment. FAMACHA is an acronym made from the person who created the system, Dr. Faffa Malan and the CHA stands for chart. The system was developed originally in South Africa to treat and control *Haemonchus contortus*, the Barber Pole worm in goats and sheep. It is a way of measuring the degree of anemia or blood loss in animals and treat accordingly. Since only a small percentage of the animals 20-30 % actually carry the worms and shed eggs, it was found that the animals can handle a small worm burden and likely not needing to be dewormed or at least as often. There are 5 categories in order to assess eye mucus membrane color and hence this correlates to degree of anemia and treatment from this chart. Category 1 has pink to red mucus membranes and without infection to category 5 that have extremely pale, almost white membranes and near death. Categories 3, 4, and 5 should be treated. Between fecal counts and FAMACHA, your vet can help you develop an effective parasite control program.

-Dr. Wanda Schmeltz