

Ask A Vet: CL - Troublesome Infection in Goats

Sunday, June 22, 2014

Dear Dr. Weldy's,

My family has purchased a few kid goats recently to keep as pets on the farm. The place that we bought them from said they had some goats with "CL" recently, but didn't say anything else. What is "CL" and is it something that we should be concerned with?

-New Goat Parents

Dear Parents,

Congratulations on your new purchase. Goats can be a lot of fun to have around! Unfortunately, CL is something to be concerned with and to watch for carefully over the next few months. "CL" is short for a disease called Caseous Lymphadenitis. It is an infection caused by a bacterium called *Corynebacterium pseudotuberculosis*. This bacterium is found in the environment, and can linger in hay, shavings, or soil for up to 8 months. The usual way that a goat becomes infected is by a cut or deep scrape around the head, neck, or legs. If the bacterium finds its way into the cut, an abscess will form 1-3 months later. The abscess may fade with time and the goat can appear perfectly normal. However, usually the bacteria will travel to a local lymph node and stay. An abscessed lymph node can appear months to even years later. The pus that forms within this lymph node is extremely thick and does not simply flow out as in other abscesses. Frequently, most goats do not show any early signs other than swollen lymph nodes. Treatment is often unsuccessful, and can contaminate your barn to future goats. Some of the treatments which could be carried out by your veterinarian are: removal of the affected lymph node, draining the abscess, and/or long term treatment with antibiotics. Most of the time, the abscess will fill back up, or spread to further places, ultimately causing the goat to become mortally sick. It's recommended that the affected goat is isolated from other animals regardless of what treatment is performed.

The bacteria can be infective to goats, sheep, cattle, swine, horses, and even humans. If an abscess ruptures or is lanced, any pus should be handled only with gloves. Hay or other bedding should be collected and incinerated if possible. Because of the infectious potential and long term problems, frequently treatment is not attempted and the affected animals are euthanized and removed from the property.

This disease is one of the most serious problems affecting sheep and goats. When purchasing livestock it is important to ask if the farm of origin has had any signs of infectious diseases such as CL. Hopefully this answers most of the questions regarding CL. Contact your veterinarian for further information.

-Dr. Jason Heitzman