

Club Lamb Fungus Brief

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What is it?

Club Lamb Fungus is-as the name implies- a fungal infection of the skin. It is caused by a member of the Trychophyton family. This is the same family of fungi that cause ringworm. It can be spread to people and causes a nasty ringworm-like skin infection. So be careful!

How Does it Spread?

Mostly it is spread from lamb to lamb by direct contact at shows. However, it also survives for years in the environment so once it is in a barn it will essentially always be there. It is also easily carried from lamb to lamb on things like blankets, tubes, clippers or your hands.

Which Lambs are at Risk?

There are a number of risk factors but the number one most important risk factor is close clipping and shampooing out the natural protective lanolin.

Unshorn and unwashed sheep almost never get fungal infections of the skin. The lanolin they produce has incredible natural protective ability.

The second most important risk factor is contact with other animals. This of course happens at events like shows and sales. Since that is why we are all here all of our lambs are at risk.

When Will I See It And What Will I See?

Between one and four weeks after your lamb is exposed an infected lamb will have a raised area where the wool is clumped. It is much easier to feel the early signs than it is to see them.

As the disease progresses the wool will fall out in a more or less circular pattern and it will develop a scab with the skin under the scab oozing clear or blood tinged fluid.

When the lesions heal the wool will usually come back much darker or even black.

What Should I Do?

First and foremost you need to consult with your veterinarian if your lamb shows signs of Club Lamb Fungus.

Second, separate the infected lambs from the rest of your flock and do not take your lamb to shows while the infection is active.

Third, protect yourself and wear examination gloves when handling infected lambs.

Fourth, treat the environment. Many people have used Captan as an environmental treatment. Products like Tek Trol are also fungicidal and good environmental treatments.

Fifth, the infection will heal itself in 1-4 months. You probably want to speed that up and that is exactly why you should work with your veterinarian. Some of the common treatments include:

.5% chlorhexadine (Nolvasan - 3 oz. per gallon) has been effective. But remember Chlorhexidine is inactivated by soap. The entire affected animal should be treated daily for 5 days, then weekly for 3 treatments.

1:10 dilution of hypochlorite solution (Chlorox) has worked well for some lambs. The entire affected animal should be treated daily for 5 days, then weekly for 3 treatments.

Show supply dealers also sell some shampoos and treatments as well as prevention products.

A mixture of 1 part 7% iodine and 3 parts of baby oil used on the lesion for 4 days only is said to dry up lesions effectively.

Vitamin A injection may speed healing. Let your lamb get some sun. The sun's rays do inhibit dermatophyte fungi.

Your veterinarian may suggest other treatments as well.

How Can I Prevent This?

It should be clear that Club Lamb Fungus can really put a dent in your show season. So preventing it is much better than treating it after the fact.

1. Isolate incoming animals for 30 days.
2. Remember, your lamb's own lanolin is protective. Do not over wash your lambs.
3. Isolate infected lambs from others until their wool grows back. Also isolate lambs from cattle with ringworm.
4. Clean and disinfect pens where infected lambs have been. Use a solution of bleach, or a commercial product like Tek Trol. Tek Trol is more effective in the presence of organic material than bleach.
5. Disinfect your clippers often during clipping and between animals. Chlorhexidine or Tek Trol Aerosol works well for this. There are also commercial products available at your favorite show supply dealer.
6. Never ever share equipment with other exhibitors.
7. After the show and before you bring the lamb home spray the entire lamb with a 0.5% Chlorhexidine solution. There are also commercial products available at you favorite show ring supply dealer.

While Club Lamb Fungus is a troublesome affliction if you pay attention to detail and follow a careful prevention strategy you should be able to keep it from being a problem.

Good Luck Goin' Showin'!