

“COCCIDIOSIS”

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Coccidiosis is a costly disease for lamb/goat producers, and many researchers estimate it is responsible for more economic loss than any other disease of sheep/goats. Coccidiosis can adversely affect lamb/goat producers that raise them in confinement or semi-confinement systems. The more intensive the management system, the more prevalent the disease. Indoor jug lambing, indoor nurseries and weaning pens are fertile ground for infections. Pasture raised livestock are not immune to this disease either. Club lamb/goat producers are naturally more susceptible to coccidia pressure. Here are the pertinent facts:

- (1) **TRANSMISSION**—Coccidia is most common In 4–8-week-old lambs/kids. Stress at weaning combined with the loss of mother’s milk puts post weaned lambs in a vulnerable stage. Coccidia are protozoa that have a life cycle of 14 days. The genus Eimeria has 10 known species that affect sheep/goats but only a few are responsible for the disease outbreaks. The Eimeria that are present in sheep are not the same species that affect goats---they are host specific. The basic mode of transmission takes place when livestock ingest oocytes that have been spread on the ground and in water from the feces of infected animals. These coccidia oocyst are very resistant to environmental factors and become infectious in warm moist conditions. Sporulated oocyst can live up to a year in areas out of direct sunlight. The activated oocyst attacks the linings of the small intestine and the damage done results in epithelial cells that are prevented from proper transport of nutrients and fluids.
- (2) **SYMPTOMS**—babies become less thrifty with loss of appetite. Feed conversion is reduced and growth is stunted. Lambs may have an open fleece look and kids will exhibit a rough hair coat. Mild, dark scours are one of your best clues. In more advanced stages, the young animal will have severe diarrhea with streaks of blood in the stool. Anemia can set in followed by severe dehydration.
- (3) **DIAGNOSIS**---is best determined with fecal samples evaluated by a vet.
- (4) **TREATMENT**—There are a number of treatment options but unfortunately most have been overused and today’s coccidia is very resistant to old school treatments. This is

strictly my opinion but I think Amprolium, sulphas and tetracyclines are a waste of your time and money. My suggestion is to first of all develop a relationship with a vet who will work with you on your specific operation. The effective treatment of lambs/goats involves the use of anti-protozoals such as Ponazuril (Marquis), Toltrazuril (Baycox), and diclazuril (Vecoxin). I personally have had better success with Diclazuril or Toltrazuril. Marquis has been used heavily in recent years and is still effective in larger doses of multi day treatments. These products are not labeled for use in lambs/kids but vets may prescribe these for extra label use for producers with a history of significant Coccidia pressure. The best option is prevention!

“PRO TIP”—Rumensin is by far the best coccidiostat and can be mixed in the creep feed for control of coccidia in weanling lambs/kids. Rumensin is not labeled for use in sheep/goats and requires a directive from a vet. Rumensin is labeled for use in weanling goats. Rumensin should only be added to feed being mixed by professional mills. Calibration and precise mixing are required because Rumensin is toxic to sheep/goats at elevated levels. When lambs/kids have a healthy gut function, all the other problems like pneumonia tend to be minimized. At Jacoby’s we do work with club lamb and kid producers that need help with chronic problems like Coccidia pressure. Give us a call to see what option might be right for you! Thanks for your time and good luck with your stock!