

“THIAMINE DEFICIENCY IN SHEEP AND GOATS”

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Thiamine deficiency can result (B1 deficiency) can result in a condition called polioencephalomalacia or sheep/goat polio for short. This polio is a disease of the central nervous system caused by a Vitamin B1 deficiency. Since the rumen manufactures B Vitamins, the polio is not caused by insufficient thiamine but instead the ability to synthesize it properly in the rumen. Thiamine deficiency can develop in healthy lambs and kids when the following factors are taking place: (1) Stress from weaning or shipping; (2) sudden change in diet; (3) onset of acidosis (4) elevated chlorine levels in drinking water; (5) and treatment of animals with sulfa drugs and/or corid.

SYMPTOMS: The disease usually hits suddenly and the animal tends to stand or sit alone. They will act blind and stare out into space. They will become disoriented, lose their appetite and be reluctant to drink. Animals in advanced stages will head press against a post, fence or wall. They may lie around with their necks arched over their backs. Advanced cases usually run temps of 104 and up. Without proper treatment early in this process, most will die within 48 hours. This disease can be easily confused with other diseases such as overeating, black leg, tetanus and acidosis.

TREATMENT: Vitamin B1 injections either IV or IM.

PRO TIP--- I recommend monthly vitamin shots of 3 cc B12 and 1 cc of B1 I.M. You can also alternate between B Complex (3 cc) I.M. and the B12/B1 shots every month. BoSe is always a good joint and musculoskeletal vitamin to add to your monthly vitamin routine. 1 cc I.M. for lambs and kids under 100 lbs. One final note on this deficiency. It can also affect mature sheep and goats and typically shows up just prior to lambing and kidding. Many times, the pregnant mother will be under severe stress from twin lamb disease (lambing sickness) and she may have some acidosis or metabolic imbalances. Blindness is usually the result of this deficiency and treatment with B1 injections is appropriate along with other management practices to treat the lambing/kidding sickness. Thiamine deficiency affects a small percentage of feed lot lambs but the loss of an expensive show lamb or goat certainly can hurt. Proper management and prevention is the key. Thanks, and good luck with your stock!