

DRUG USE IN SHEEP AND GOATS

A drug is a substance that is used to prevent, treat, diagnose, and/or relieve symptoms of a disease or abnormal condition. There are many types of drugs that can be given to sheep/goats, including antibiotics (antimicrobials), anthelmintics (dewormers), coccidiostats, anti-inflammatories, hormones and nutrients. Drugs may be over-the-counter (OTC), prescription (Rx), and/or extra label. It is essential that all drugs be used judiciously and that their use be minimized.



Antibiotics fight bacterial infections. They are sometimes necessary to maintain the health and welfare of sheep/goats. Unfortunately, not a lot of antibiotics are FDA-approved for use in sheep/goats. In fact, only three are approved for sheep and even less for goats. As a result, extra label drug use is often required to treat many disease problems. In addition, all antibiotics now require a veterinary prescription (Rx).

Anthelmintics are probably the most used drugs in sheep/goat medicine, due to the species' high susceptibility to worm infections. There are three available classes of dewormers, including drugs approved in each class for sheep. Fewer dewormers are approved for goats, often necessitating extra label drug use. Dewormers are available for purchase OTC. Coccidiostats are frequently added to the feed, mineral, and/or milk replacer. They are also available without prescription. However, drugs to treat coccidiosis require veterinary oversight.



Animal drugs are formulated in many forms for different administration methods. Oral medications include drenches, boluses, pastes, premixes, and water additives.

Injectables are given in the muscle (IM), under the skin (SQ), or in the vein (IV). Topicals are applied to the skin. A few drugs have other delivery methods.



Most drugs have withdrawal periods.

A withdrawal period is the amount of time that must elapse before a treated animal's products can be consumed or enter the food supply. Withdrawal periods ensure that there are no harmful drug residues in animal products.

Many drugs are given extra label to sheep/goats. Extra label drug use (ELDU) is the use of an approved drug in a manner that differs from what is written on the label. This could be an unapproved species (like sheep or goats), treatment of a different disease or condition (e.g., footrot instead of pneumonia), or using a different dosage, route of administration (SQ instead of IM), duration of treatment, and/or withdrawal period. Only veterinarians can legally use or prescribe drugs extra label and conditions apply. A valid veterinary-client-patient relationship is required.