

# Mastitis

## UDDER MADNESS

Mastitis is one of the costliest diseases of small ruminants. It is an inflammation of the udder or mammary gland, usually caused by a bacterial infection, but also, by viruses. Stress and injury can also be contributing factors. The disease is most common in high milk producing females and/or those with multiple offspring. The heritability of clinical mastitis and somatic cell count is low (less than 10 percent) , but researchers continue to study the genetics of it in hopes of being able to select animals that are more resistant.



Mastitis comes in two forms: subclinical and clinical. Subclinical mastitis goes largely unnoticed but causes production losses, due to reduced milk production. Symptoms of clinical mastitis include fever, depression, and off-feed. The female may appear lame and/or prevent her offspring from nursing. There may be physical changes to the milk or udder. Mastitis is a welfare concern and can cause death if left untreated. Offspring of badly infected females usually become orphans.

Mastitis is usually treated with prescription antibiotics and steroids. Alternatives to antibiotics include probiotics and essential oils.



### Keys to preventing mastitis in ewes/does

- Good nutrition and health
- Proper milking hygiene
- Clean environment
- Prevent respiratory disease and soremouth
- Proper management at weaning
- Vaccination (there is a vaccine for goats)
- Early intervention of affected ewes/does
- Cull females with hard lumps or spoiled udders.