

# Double Trouble!

Sheep and goats can be infected with many different internal parasites. In fact, most fecal samples will show mixed infections. With that said, there are two parasites that producers should be most concerned about. They are the barber pole worm and coccidia. Double trouble!



## # 1 Barber pole worm

The barber pole worm (scientific name: *Haemonchus contortus*) is the most common worm to infect sheep and goats in warm, moist climates. It is also the deadliest. Adult worms live in the abomasum (true stomach) and **drink blood**. Blood loss causes anemia (pale mucous membranes, (1) and sometimes "bottle jaw," (2) an accumulation of fluid under the jaw (called submandibular edema). Other symptoms are more generic and include loss of weight and body condition and poor appetite. The barber pole worm does not usually cause diarrhea like other worms. It can cause sudden death or a more prolonged infection that impacts performance and may eventually result in death. Animals get infected when they eat the infective third-stage larvae from pasture plants. Treatment is usually with broad spectrum dewormers. Unfortunately, barber pole worms have developed resistance to most of the dewormers. Combination treatments are now recommended. Prevention is good management and genetic selection.



*Haemonchus* eggs look similar to other strongyle-type eggs. They are usually hatched for identification from the larvae.

## # 2 Coccidia

Coccidia (scientific name: *Eimeria* spp.) are single-celled protozoan parasites that can only be seen with a microscope. They have more complex life cycles than most worms, involving both sexual and asexual reproduction. The infective form is a sporulated oocyst (egg). Oocysts are smaller than roundworm eggs. Presence or absence of oocysts is not a definitive diagnosis.



Animals get infected when they ingest fecal matter from bedding and other contaminated surfaces. Coccidia damage the lining of the small intestines, which affects the absorption of nutrients. The most common symptom of coccidiosis is **diarrhea (scours)**. Affected animals usually have an unthrifty appearance, thin and gaunt with rough hair coats and dirty backsides. Some animals that are successfully treated for coccidia may remain poor-doers, due to the intestinal damage caused by the parasite. Coccidiosis is treated with amprolium and sulfa antibiotics (Rx), both extra label. Prevention is good management and coccidiostats in the feed, mineral, water, and/or milk replacer.

