

Mastitis

UDDER MADNESS

Mastitis is one of the costliest diseases of sheep and goats. It is an inflammation of the udder or mammary gland, usually caused by a bacterial infection, but also, by viruses. Stress and injury are contributing factors. The disease is most common in high milk producing females, such as parlor-milked does/ewes or those nursing multiple offspring. While the heritability of clinical mastitis and somatic cell count is low (less than 10 percent), researchers continue to study the genetics of it in hopes of being able to eventually select animals that are naturally more resistant.



Mastitis comes in two forms: subclinical and clinical. Subclinical mastitis is more common and goes largely unnoticed. It causes production loss, due to reduced milk production. Clinical mastitis can cause death if left untreated and is a welfare concern. Symptoms include fever, depression, and going off-feed. The ewe/doe may appear lame and prevent her offspring from nursing. There may be physical changes to the milk or udder. Offspring from badly infected dams usually become orphans (or die).

Mastitis is usually treated with prescription antibiotics and steroids. More natural treatments, such as essential oils are being investigated.



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
- Early intervention of affected ewes/does
- Cull females with hard lumps or spoiled udders.
- Vaccination (in non-US countries)