

# What else can cause a doe or ewe to abort?

Infectious diseases cause most sheep and goat abortions, but not all of them. Abortions can also be caused by stress, trauma, nutritional deficiencies, plant toxins, fetal malformations, and some medications.

**Stress** can induce abortion by disrupting normal bodily processes. Excessive levels of the stress hormone cortisol can interfere with placental function and fetal development. Stress comes in many forms, including weather extremes, handling practices, overcrowding, physical trauma (e.g., fighting or being crushed in gateways) and exposure to predators. You should avoid handling, shearing, or transporting sheep/goats during their last month of pregnancy.



Significant deficiencies in any essential **nutrient** could result in poor fetal health. Angora goats are particularly susceptible to nutritional deficiencies and stress-induced abortions.

**Fescue toxicosis** can lead to abortion and other reproductive problems in sheep and especially goats. Toxins in other plants can cause early embryonic death, birth defects, and abortion.

Estrogen, prostaglandins (and its analogs), and glucocorticoids (e.g., dexamethasone) all **terminate** pregnancy in ewes and does. In fact, sometimes they are given (Rx) to induce parturition or terminate an early pregnancy.

While selenium injections (Rx) are often advocated in late gestation, **BO-SE®** injections have caused death and abortion in pregnant ewes.

The dewormer **albendazole (Valbazen®)** is teratogenic, meaning it can disturb the development of the embryo or fetus, especially in early gestation. While not scientifically proven, there are concerns that levamisole (Prohibit®, Leva-Med®) might cause late term abortions in goats.

