

CONTAGIOUS ECTHYMA or ORF

Sore Mouth in Sheep and Goats

Sore mouth, also known as orf or contagious ecthyma, is a viral infection that predominantly affects sheep and goats. It is caused by the orf virus, a type of poxvirus. Sore mouth has a global distribution and is prevalent in various regions. In the United States, a survey conducted in 2001 indicated that approximately 40% of sheep and goat operations reported cases of orf virus infections within the preceding three years.

CAUSES OF SORE MOUTH

The virus-containing scabs shed by infected animals can remain infectious in the environment, posing a risk of infection to susceptible animals. Contaminated bedding, feed, trucks, and direct contact with infected animals are common routes of transmission, leading to the infection of an entire flock. Young animals are particularly vulnerable as they are more likely to display visible symptoms due to their lack of previous exposure to the virus and their developing immune systems.

PREVENTION OF SORE MOUTH

To mitigate the risk of orf virus infection, several protective measures can be implemented: Minimize mouth/muzzle cuts by clearing grazing areas of thistle and other potentially harmful vegetation. Quarantine new animals until they can be evaluated for sore mouth to prevent introducing the virus into the flock. Avoid taking animals with orf virus infection to public events like fairs and shows, reducing the potential for spreading the virus. It is challenging to entirely prevent infection since the orf virus can survive in soil, and carrier animals may not display symptoms. However, adopting the aforementioned measures can aid in prevention.



***This is not a
Notifiable or Reportable
disease***

Sources

Updated order of the secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health ... (n.d.-b). [https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/Updated%](https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/Updated%20)

SYMPTOMS OF SORE MOUTH

The following are common symptoms of Sore Mouth:

- Lesions and scabs
- Swelling
- Ulcers
- Blisters
- Pain & Discomfort
- Weight Loss

TREATMENT OF SORE MOUTH

There are several commercial live virus vaccines available. Producers contemplating the use of an orf virus vaccine in their flock should seek guidance from a veterinarian. Vaccination is recommended only for flocks with a history of previous infections, as administering the vaccine will result in orf virus infection in the animals and potential contamination of the operation with scabs containing the virus. It is important to note that all orf virus vaccines contain live virus, which can cause infection in humans

Factsheet provided by:

**The Idaho Sheep & Goat
Health Board**

