



# ***Ovine Epididymitis***

## ***Brucella ovis in Sheep and Goats***

*Brucella ovis* is a bacterium that primarily affects male sheep, leading to epididymitis and reduced fertility. Although it can occasionally cause abortions and increased perinatal mortality, its main impact is on rams. Rams can carry and transmit *B. ovis* to other males, while ewes exhibit relative resistance and clear the organism quickly if infected. Farmed red deer in New Zealand are the only other confirmed natural hosts of *B. ovis*, but experimental infections have been reported in goats, bighorn sheep, white-tailed deer, and pregnant cows. While cervids, goats, and bighorn sheep may develop epididymitis, *B. ovis* does not appear to infect humans.

### **CAUSES OF *B. ovis***

*B. ovis* is primarily introduced into a flock through infected animals or semen. Preventing contact between *B. ovis*-free flocks and potentially infected sheep is crucial to avoid transmission. Rams should not be housed with rams of unknown *B. ovis* status, and caution should be exercised when breeding ewes recently mated by such

### **PREVENTION OF *B. ovis***

To prevent the transmission of *B. ovis* in flocks:

Avoid contact between *B. ovis*-free flocks and potentially infected sheep, especially rams.

Test sheep for *B. ovis* before entering artificial insemination facilities or crossing borders.

Consider using accredited *B. ovis*-free flocks and rams or test new rams before introducing them to uninfected flocks.

Palpate the scrotum of rams and perform laboratory tests on those with abnormalities to screen for *B. ovis*.

Cull all rams or implement a test-and-slaughter program

### **SYMPTOMS OF *B. ovis***

Symptoms of *B. ovis* in sheep and goats include:

- Epididymitis: Rams typically develop epididymitis, characterized by inflammation of the epididymis, which can lead to swelling, pain, and reduced fertility.
- Abscesses: While less common, abscesses may occasionally form in other parts of the body, such as the scrotum or prepuce.
- Generally asymptomatic in ewes

### **TREATMENT OF *B. ovis***

There is currently no specific treatment for *B. ovis* infection in sheep and goats. Once a ram is infected, it becomes a carrier and can transmit the bacterium to other animals. Therefore, management strategies typically focus on preventing the spread of *B. ovis* within the flock. Vaccinations and isolation are good preventative measures but be sure to contact your veterinarian for professional help.



***This is a  
notifiable disease***

#### **Sources**

“Brucellosis: *Brucella Ovis* - CFSPH. (n.d.-b). [https://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Factsheets/pdfs/brucellosis\\_ovis.pdf](https://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Factsheets/pdfs/brucellosis_ovis.pdf)”

Factsheet provided by:

**The Idaho Sheep & Goat  
Health Board**

