

Wyoming Livestock Board
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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

State vets advise livestock owners to take protective measures during lambing season

Lambing and kidding season has arrived, and the Wyoming Livestock Board (WLSB), Wyoming Department of Health (WDH) and Wyoming State Veterinary Laboratory (WSVL) want to remind livestock producers this spring of the need to protect themselves and their animals from diseases that can be spread at birthing time.

Diagnosis of two separate, isolated cases of Q-fever in sheep and goats was recently confirmed at WSVL. One of the cases is in southwest Wyoming, and the other in northwest Wyoming. They are currently being addressed by WLSB and WDH veterinary staff. The cases are not epidemiologically related.

In Wyoming, flocks affected by this disease are not required to be quarantined, but are monitored by WLSB veterinary staff.

“State veterinary staff works with the owner and private practitioner to educate them about the disease, reduce prevalence in the flock, and prevent further spread while state public health addresses the human health concerns,” explained Wyoming State Veterinarian Dr. Jim Logan.

Q-fever is a zoonotic disease caused by the bacteria *Coxiella burnetii*, and is endemic in animals throughout the US. There is no vaccine available for it. Infection of livestock is generally unapparent except for abortions. It is primarily spread to humans and other animals through inhalation and/or ingestion of the organisms, through contaminated materials such as animal excreta or birthing products, from consuming unpasteurized milk from infected animals, or from tick bites.

Most people who are infected with Q-fever become ill within two to three weeks after exposure. Symptoms include fever, headache, muscle aches, weakness, chills, vomiting, cough, and less commonly diarrhea and rash. Most people recover within two to three weeks after infection, but chronic infections and fatalities can occur in a small proportion of cases.

In addition to Q-fever, Dr. Logan added that there are other zoonotic diseases that can be transmitted from infected sheep or goats at birthing time, including Ovine Enzootic Abortion caused by *Chlamydia abortus*, and *Campylobacteriosis*. Similar to Q-fever, these diseases are also endemic in the US and cause abortions in sheep and goats. Q-fever and *Campylobacter* are both on the Wyoming Reportable Disease list.

Wyoming State Veterinarian, Dr. Jim Logan and State Public Health Veterinarian Dr. Karl Musgrave recommend producers take the following prevention measures to minimize exposure to Q-fever:

- use proper personal hygiene when handling livestock;
- appropriately dispose of sheep and goat birth products;
- restrict access to potentially infected animals and their environment;
- use only pasteurized milk and milk products.

More information on Q-fever and other diseases in livestock can be obtained by contacting the WLSB Field Office at 307-857-4140. For more information on zoonotic diseases in humans, please call Dr. Dan O'Leary of the WDH at 307-777-6991.