

WHAT IS SMALL RUMINANT QUALITY ASSURANCE AND HOW DOES IT AFFECT MY OPERATION?

by Dr. Beth Johnson, DVM

Quality Assurance is defined as the process where you strive to provide a product that instills trust and confidence in the consumer to encourage continued or increased consumption of your product. The product in small ruminant production can be meat, milk, fiber, or seed stock to current and new producers. So how does your plan to accomplish this incredible feat on your farm stack up to others, and how do you plan to enact this plan to provide the best product possible?

In this article we will discuss the following components of a Quality Assurance Plan:

- To produce your product with no blemishes on the finished product.
- Prevent injury while maximizing effectiveness of antibiotics and vaccines to produce a quality product.
- Provide a wholesome product that the consumer has trust and confidence in consuming or wearing.
- Causes no harm to the consumer!
- Uses best management practices that allows for maximum profit to the producer.
- And finally, how does your biosecurity stack up for prevention of introduction of diseases.

Top Quality Product

Our goal as a producer should always be to provide the best quality product which will ultimately keep us in business by stimulating interest in our products. Not only should we strive to market healthy livestock, we should try to prevent any underlying issues, i.e. blemishes to the carcasses, undesirable wool, and/or off flavored milk/cheeses.

When administering medications to your animals, be sure to follow label directions on the bottle of the medicine you are administering:

- Proper dose
- Proper route of administration
- Proper location of injections; always

put injectable substances in front of the shoulder area.

- Proper needle size
- Proper withdrawal period
- Proper storage
- Know what you are administering and why

By following these simple steps you have initiated the process of going down the pathway of Quality Assurance!

Why would it be important to administer medications in the neck and chest floor area? Where are the most valuable cuts of meat in a lamb or kid? If you administer an injection in the hind leg, not only do you run the risk of hitting the sciatic nerve which controls the hind leg muscle, you may also cause an injection site reaction which may lead to condemnation of the affected muscle. Processors frown upon throwing away the most valuable cut of meat due to negligence by the producer.

When administering medication to your animals, do you know that some medicines stay in the animal's tissue longer than others. This is very important when animals are harvested prior to the drug's withdrawal period, and the meat has residues in the tissue from the product administered. Some of the more common antibiotics that have been identified as residues in meat are: Tetracyclines, penicillins, Sulfamethazines, Cephalosporins, and others. If antibiotics are detected, the carcass is disposed of and it could possibly contaminate other carcasses resulting in recalls of products. This is also true for some anthelmintics. Do not administer animal health products and then sell the animal for harvesting until they are cleared of the product. Know your medicines!!

So let's switch gears and talk a little about Biosecurity. Biosecurity measures are defined as the procedures intended to protect humans or animals against disease or harmful biological agents. Some examples of Biosecurity are:

- Quarantine all new additions to the flock/herd.
- Protect/restrict visitors onto your farm through providing protective

boot covers or foot baths and disposable gloves.

- Keep confined areas clean and disinfected as much as possible.
- Clean and disinfect all equipment and livestock handling facilities, routinely

These are just a few of the biosecurity measures you can institute on your farm to prevent disease introduction and control. When quarantining, stall the new additions in an area where they have no contact with your animals. They should be quarantined for a minimum of 10 and preferably 14 days. With small ruminants it is recommended that a fecal examination be performed on arrival, animal is dewormed, if necessary, and then a follow up fecal examination performed in 7-10 days to determine if anthelmintic/parasite resistance is present. You do not want to introduce resistant parasites into your flock/herd.

Some of the diseases that have been introduced into naïve flocks/herds are pinkeye, footrot, pneumonia, soremouth, and ringworm through inappropriate quarantine procedures. You would much rather treat one animal than a whole flock with these diseases and many producers have learned the lesson the hard way!

Also while administering antibiotics, vaccines, etc., you can understand why it is important to utilize sterile syringes/needles to prevent injection site reactions/abscesses. Always remember we should strive to prevent blemishes as much as possible on a carcass/hide/wool of our small ruminant animals.

Always remember that a healthy happy animal always performs better than a diseased, distressed one! Our goal as producers should always be to produce the best possible product while maximizing our profit.

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