Greetings,

If you are receiving this newsletter it is a reminder we need your input completing a small ruminant survey, and ask you to complete the enclosed or attached. From the information received we can become more aware of our clientele’s situation, determine if our programs have been beneficial, and learn how we can better serve your interests. This information will be utilized to determine programmatic direction for the next five years.

I have also included an article about Tapeworms in this newsletter. While they are normally not a problem to small ruminant producers, fall of 2013 proved to be different.

Thank you for your time and support, I wish you the best for 2014.

Sincerely,

Robert Spencer
Urban Regional Extension Specialist

**UPCOMING ACTIVITIES**

**Livestock Fencing Workshop, Saturday March 1, 2014; 9 AM – 12 PM (sign-in from 8:30-9:00 AM)**
Lauderdale County Extension Office, 802 Veterans Drive, Florence, AL 35630

Whether you have cows, goats, or sheep, you know the importance of fencing. There have been some new developments with high-quality affordable fencing over the past few years, and Extension wants to share those concepts with you. This workshop includes videos on posts and fencing installation, a display of materials and tools used, and various types of fencing options. Please pre-register by calling the Lauderdale County Extension Office at 256-766-6223 or e-mail rds0002@aces.edu.

**2014 Spring Forum: Fencing, Forages, and Best Management Practices; Saturday March 22, 9 AM- 2 PM (sign-in 8:30-9 AM). Location: Winfred Thomas Agricultural Research Station, 372 Walker Lane, Hazel Green, AL 35750.** Anyone with large or small ruminants or horses knows the challenges with keeping livestock production sustainable and affordable. This event will include an education program, pasture walk, and local farm tour. It will focus on long-term forage management utilizing quality forages and mixed species grazing, fencing options and establishment, and showcase the new Small Ruminant Outreach Center and its features. Please pre-register by contacting Eddie Wheeler at 256-582-2009 or Robert Spencer at 256-766-6223 or rds0002@aces.edu.

**Tapeworms in 2013**

This past fall (August-early December 2013) brought about an unusual situation for goat and sheep producers, problems with tapeworms in their animals. During my thirteen years of working with goat and sheep producer this was my first time to hear of tapeworms infestations to the degree of diminished health and mortality in small ruminants. I initially thought this situation was confined to Northwest Alabama, but learned otherwise as I talked with producers in other parts of the State and producers in South Georgia and South-Central Tennessee. I also thought problems with tapeworms were confined to puppies, but have learned more through an inquiry with a local veterinarian and some research.
Many producers are familiar with the typical signs of tapeworm infestation: they see the obvious expelled worm eggs in feces of livestock or puppies (whereas they cannot see stomach worms, only their symptoms or eggs). We tend to notice what looks like pieces of white rice in fecal matter, and eventually notice little larvae crawling about. Mature tapeworms shed segments, which are expelled with the feces. These segments are packed with eggs.

Tapeworm is a parasite that has potential to cause intestinal disease in vertebrate animals. The tapeworm gets its name from its shape, a flat ribbon. The tapeworm belongs to the family of cestoda and is one of three members in the group of parasitic worms that also includes nematodes and trematodes. Tapeworm is a persistent worm that is difficult to remove once it is entrenched in the body. However, there are treatments that can be administered to treat cattle affected by tapeworm.

These annoying creatures have lifecycles and there are numerous species. All of which require an intermediate host to complete their life cycle. In her article “Tapeworms: problem or not?” Susan Schoenian shares the following.

Different tapeworms require different intermediate hosts. All of the important species affecting sheep, goats, and cattle require pasture mites. These mites ingest the eggs while feeding and the larval stages of the worm develop inside the mites.

Oribatid mites live in the top layer of soil. Sometimes they can be found in plant material. These mites live in huge numbers. Hundreds of thousands can live in one square meter of soil. To see one well, you would need a microscope. Sheep and goats become infected when they ingest the mites containing tapeworm larvae. Once inside the animal, it takes 6 to 7 weeks for the larvae to develop into adult tapeworms.

Moniezia expansa is the tapeworm that commonly affects sheep and goats. Moniezia benedeni, more common in cattle, can also be found in sheep and goats. Sheep and goats serve as intermediate hosts for several other species of tapeworms.

Adult worms, often up to a meter or more in length, can be expelled and passed in the environment. Tapeworm eggs can be seen in sheep and goat feces, using the standard worm count procedure. Eggs are triangular in shape.

Wikipedia describes “tapeworm infestation is the infection of the digestive tract by adult parasitic flatworms called cestodes or tapeworms. Once inside the digestive tract, a larva can grow into a very large adult tapeworm. Additionally, many tapeworm larvae cause symptoms in an intermediate host.”

Imagine what could happen in an extreme situation where an infested animal were treated with an effective wormer, and all those oversized parasites clogged up the digestive system of the host. Complications could be terminal. There are times when tapeworms may be suspect in causing livestock mortality, but some experts explain the actual culprit is the Barberpole worm or complications from tapeworm infestation and diminished health.

Tapeworms are a problem because they consume nutrients from food consumed by its hosts. Its hook-like head allows it to secure itself on the intestines of animals. The symptoms of tapeworm infestation are the same in all livestock. At first, when parasite is still in the larval stage, animals show almost no signs of infection. Later when the worms grows fully and occupy intestine of hosts that animals begin to exhibit symptoms which include weight loss, lethargy, diarrhea, atrophy and swelling of the stomach. Tapeworms in cattle are less common and less serious than in sheep and goats, but the method of treatment is the same.

Drugs including albendazole, praziquantel, oxyfendazole and fenbendazole are commonly used to treat tapeworms in livestock. Each of these drugs is available under several brand names. A veterinarian should help you decide which drug is your best option based on the stage of the growth of the tapeworm. If the worm is still in its developmental stage, albendazole is a good alternative. Consult with a vet for more information.

There is a lot more information on tapeworms and treatment on the internet and other valid resources. I hope this benefits you in case your farm encounters this problem.

Information Resources:


http://www.sheepandgoat.com/articles/tapeworms.html

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tapeworm_infection