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NF91-29 Ringworm and Club Lamb Fungus

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NebFact



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Ringworm and Club Lamb Fungus

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Sheep exhibitors, as you prepare for summer shows, examine how you prepare your sheep for the show ring. Washing and shearing removes the natural lanolin and suint that protects sheep from getting some diseases. Anyone who shows sheep this summer should be aware of ringworm and a ringworm-like disease that can be transmitted from infected sheep to humans. One ringworm type disease, caused by a fungus, is currently being called "club lamb" fungus.

Ringworm of animals is caused by two genera of fungi--Microsporum and Trichophyton. In most cases, these fungi are obligate parasites of the skin and hair (wool). They are highly contagious from animal to animal--particularly in dense population conditions. The infections not only transmit readily to other animals, but they often transmit to human attendants of the animals and cause severe skin lesions. When animal dermatophytes infect humans, the disease is usually more severe clinically than the corresponding disease in their normal animal host. Acute inflammatory skin lesions may develop that are accompanied by scar formation.

The past couple of years, we have had outbreaks appear to be present where show-fitted sheep have become infected and are readily transmitting the infection to other sheep (at home and in the show arena) and to human attendants. Sheep that are extensively groomed and bathed seem to be more susceptible to infection. The causative fungus appears to be a Trichophyton sp. that may be related to a variety of *T. verrucosum*. Infection results from direct contact with infected animals as well as by indirect contact through clippers, brushes, combs, blankets and contaminated pens. Unless vigorously disinfected, these materials may remain infectious for several years.

Although the disease is not life-threatening, it has reached epidemic proportions in some western states. To help limit the spread of this disease in Nebraska, take these precautions:

1. Disinfect equipment with a commercial fungicide.
2. Wash and shear show lambs as little as possible.
3. The scab stage of the disease is most infectious, so use protective gloves when handling sheep with lesions.

4. Scrub thoroughly with a detergent solution after each handling.
5. Do not exhibit animals with lesions unless wool growth has restarted in the infected area.
6. When you have questions about diagnosis or treatment of infected sheep, call your local veterinarian first.
7. If you notice any possible lesions on a youth or adult, call your family physician, and be sure to mention that this fungus could be an offshoot of Trichophyton and may not respond to medication normally used to treat ringworm.

References

Iowa 4-H Fact Sheet "Club Lamb Fungus"

Ovine Dermatophytosis (Ringworm). A.C. Pier, Dept. of Veterinary Science, University of Wyoming, R.L. Jones, College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, Colorado State University

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