

## Caprine herpesvirus: eradication from infected flocks

*Herpesviruses are notorious for causing latent infections, and serologically positive animals may shed virus intermittently for months or even years. Shedding usually follows some type of stress which causes a temporary immunosuppression.*

Caprine herpesvirus has shown to persist in the genital tract for at least a year,<sup>1</sup> but the importance of other methods of transmission, such as the respiratory route, had not been determined until recently.

The epidemiology of this virus disease was studied in 1987 in an infected goat flock.<sup>2</sup> The flock had experienced an outbreak of vulvovaginitis, and serological testing revealed that 15 of 40 does were positive.

To determine if serologically positive does infect their kids before they are sexually mature, all kids were blood tested at monthly intervals, from soon after birth to about 6 months of age. The kids were not weaned until the project was completed, so there was close contact between the does and their kids for the duration of the study.

The testing showed 21 to 60 kids had passively acquired antibody, and the duration of this passive immunity was 8–12 weeks. Of more importance was the finding that there was no evidence that active infection had occurred in any of the kids, either in those that were seronegative from birth, or in those with passive immunity once they became seronegative.

This confirms that caprine herpesvirus is primarily a venereal disease in this country. It also means farmers can eradicate the disease from their flocks over a period of time by employing the following practices:

- Separate kids from older animals *before* they become sexually active, and run them as a separate flock.
- Use only *seronegative* bucks or teasers with the kids.
- Test and cull older seropositive goats (especially bucks and teasers) as soon as it is economically practical.

Provided farmers can run two separate flocks, it should be possible for them to work towards eradicating caprine herpesvirus. Blood tests are available through MAFQual Animal Health Laboratories, and the current fee is \$2.50 per animal.

### References

- 1 Horner, G W, 1982: Caprine herpesvirus reappears. *Surveillance* 9(2):24.
- 2 Horner, G W, 1987: Herpesvirus vulvovaginitis in goats. *Proceedings Goat Seminar*, Publication No. 115, Veterinary Continuing Education, Massey University, Palmerston North, pp 73–77.

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