

November 16, 2011

Peter Stockdale: Worms

Peter Stockdale gave us an excellent presentation on sheep parasites. His book, 'Living with Worms' is produced by Canadian Organic Growers, website www.COG.ca, phone # 613-216-0741.

Three aspects of worm populations affecting sheep health

- Symbiosis – living together for mutual benefit
- Parasitism – one organism getting food from another – not a benefit to the host, but keeps host alive till life cycle is complete
- Disease

Humans restrict animals' movements by pasturing same areas too frequently, continually exposing flocks to worms. We need to push toward symbiosis, not disease. Some factors include:

- Well nourished ewes produce lots of milk so lambs get good start
- Increase immunity by limiting stress on ewes – do not isolate from rest of flock, as stress increases production of cortico-steroids, which lowers immunity
- Identification of worms: 6 species in sheep. Those which suck blood more likely to cause disease – the more worms, the faster the death.

Peter gave us a handout on life cycle of Nematode worms of sheep

Tapeworms don't usually cause death, but carcasses may be condemned because of cysts in meat.

Prevention and Control

- get the number of larvae on pasture down by grazing smaller areas 2 weeks at a time, then move
- cattle can be used to ingest worms by sharing pasture – not affected by most sheep species
- insure good diet – keeps immunity up
- good shepherding – check body condition of sheep, alter feed as necessary