

Pneumonia in Summer

— Written By [Stefani Garbacik](#)

Most of us are accustomed to hearing the word “pneumonia” and associate it with the wet cold of winter. For small ruminants, goats in particular, summer is prime time for pneumonia. The increasing temperatures, humidity, and constant threat of wet weather may cause a huge spike in the number of sheep or goats you see with pneumonia. It can occur year round and impact your entire herd, but as with most diseases, the young kids are the most susceptible.

Intensively managed animals are highly susceptible; animals in crowded barns, poor sanitation and ventilation, and high stress levels can increase the chances of catching pneumonia. Pneumonia is an inflammation of the lungs and may be caused by bacteria, virus, or parasites. The most recognizable symptoms would be an elevated body temperature (above 104° F), possible nasal discharge, and heavy, labored breathing. Constant coughing, eye discharge, depression, weight loss and loss of appetite are also common symptoms.

It is important to consult your veterinarian when diagnosing and treating any illness, and the same goes for pneumonia cases. Medicines that may be prescribed by your veterinarian include: Banamine, penicillin, ampicillin, oxytetracycline, Nuflor, Naxcel, etc. Animals should be quarantined and held in a cool, dry space with access to fresh water and forage (hay or grass, not bagged feed). Electrolytes may be necessary if the animal is severely dehydrated.

Prevention is key in keeping pneumonia under control in your herd. A vaccination program can decrease the likelihood of an animal contracting pneumonia. Proper sanitation and ventilation are tools that should be utilized to help prevent all diseases, and ensures the health of your animals.

If an animal dies suddenly on your farm, NCDA can perform necropsies to determine the cause of death. This would be useful in making management decisions for the rest of your herd. The two most common causes of death for goats are 1) worms and 2) pneumonia. Proper vaccination, management practices, and nutrition can provide your animals with the tools they need to combat almost anything.

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Pneumonia

This disease is inflammation or infection of the lungs. There are many causes of pneumonia including viruses, bacteria, fungal agents, mycoplasmas, parasites, irritant dust and fumes and aspiration of liquids. The specific cause of pneumonia is not easily determined and requires diagnostic help in consultation with a veterinarian. The ultimate cause may be a combination of factors. Management problems such as overcrowding, poor ventilation and inadequate nutrition are sometimes to blame.

Signs: Some of the common signs of pneumonia include difficult or labored breathing, coughing, fever, nasal discharge, extended head, mouth breathing and slow or difficult movement. Other signs that may be related to specific types of pneumonia include arthritis, mastitis, conjunctivitis and keratitis.

Treatment: The definitive treatment will depend on the diagnosed cause of pneumonia. Broad spectrum antibiotics will need to be administered to combat either primary or secondary bacterial infections. Once an effective antibiotic is determined, treatment should continue for 48 hours post cessation of clinical signs. Dewormers effective against invading lung parasites should be given when the cause has been determined to be parasites. If white muscle disease has resulted in aspiration pneumonia in lambs, the underlying selenium deficiency must also be treated. If poor ventilation has predisposed animals to pneumonia, improved air quality is a must as well.

Prevention: Remove sick or affected animals from the herd and place in isolation. Pay attention to proper ventilation, housing and nutrition. Avoid crowding and isolate purchased goats or those stressed by traveling or showing. A veterinarian should be consulted to help manage this condition.

References cited: Mary C. Smith & David M. Sherman : Goat Medicine

See also CAEV Pneumonia at <http://create.extension.org/node/25624>

See also Lungworms at <http://create.extension.org/node/25576>