

Highlights of NAHMS Sheep 2001: Parts II and III

The USDA's National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) collected data on sheep health and management practices from a stratified random sample of sheep production sites in 22 States¹ as part of the Sheep 2001 study. These sites represented 87.4 percent of the January 1, 2001, U.S. sheep inventory and 72.3 percent of U.S. sheep producers. Overall, 3,210 operations participated in the first interview from December 29, 2000, to January 26, 2001. A second interview was completed by 1,101 of these operations between February 5, 2001, and April 27, 2001.

The following highlights were excerpted from two reports released in February 2003: Part II: Reference of Sheep Health in the United States, 2001; and Part III: Lambing Practices, Spring 2001.

Scrapie Management

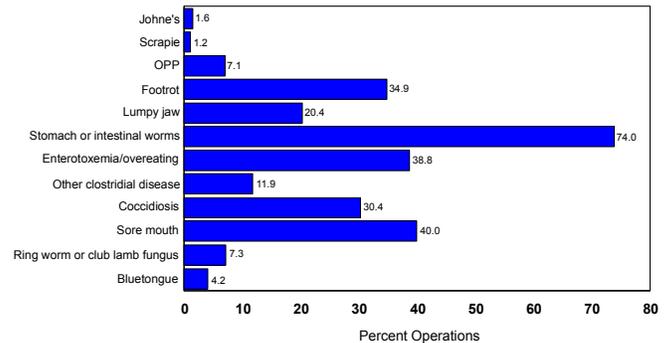
Although 92.6 percent of producers had, at the very least, heard of scrapie, only 3.4 percent of these producers were participating in the National Scrapie Flock Certification Program, and nearly half (49.8 percent) had not heard of the program at the time of the study.

For producers who had, at the very least, heard of scrapie, 10.8 percent used genetic selection to control or prevent the disease. Of these operations, 76.8 percent used replacement rams genetically less susceptible to scrapie.

Diseases Present on Operations

The three most common diseases present (suspected or confirmed) in flocks within the previous 3 years were: stomach or intestinal worms (74.0 percent); sore mouth (40.0 percent); and enterotoxaemia/overeating disease (38.8 percent of operations) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Percent of Operations Where the Following Diseases Were Present (Suspected or Confirmed) During the Last 3 Years.



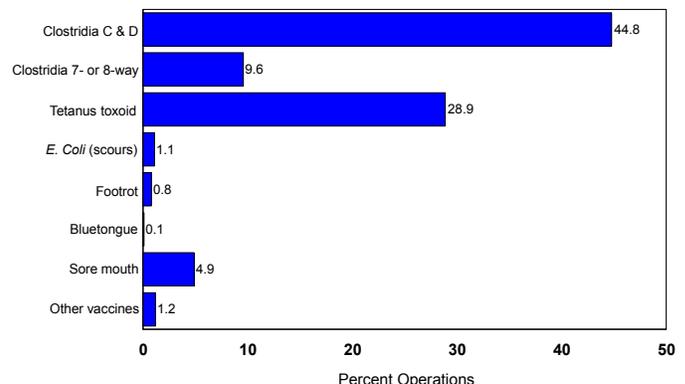
Vaccination Practices

More than four out of five operations (81.7 percent) used the same needle on more than one animal. Of these operations, the majority (61.7 percent) changed the needle after using it on 20 or fewer animals.

The three vaccines given by the largest percentage of producers to either replacement or breeding ewes, nursing lambs, and breeding rams in 2000 were: Clostridia C and D; Tetanus toxoid; and Clostridia 7- or 8-way vaccines.

The vaccine given by the largest percentage of producers to feeder lambs intended for market during 2000 was Clostridia C and D (44.8 percent of operations) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. For Operations that Had Weaned Lambs (Feeder Lambs) Intended for Market During 2000, Percentage that Gave the Following Vaccines to These Lambs After They Were Weaned.

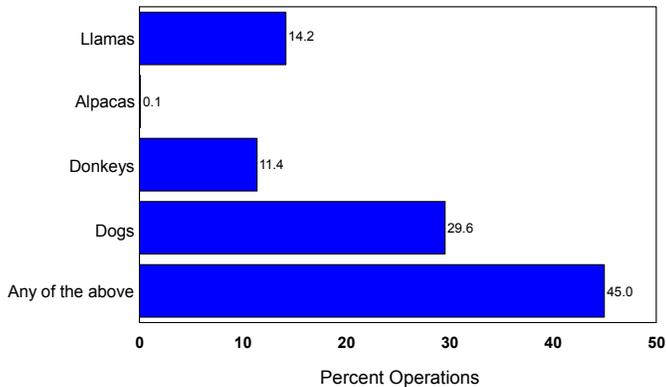


¹Arkansas, California, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Montana, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming.

General Management

Overall, 45.0 percent of operations used llamas, alpacas, donkeys, or dogs as guard animals to protect their sheep (Figure 3). Dogs were the animals used most commonly (29.6 percent of operations). Herded/open range flocks had the highest percentage (82.3 percent) of operations that used guard animals.

Figure 3. Percent of Operations that Used the Following Animals as Guards for Their Sheep.

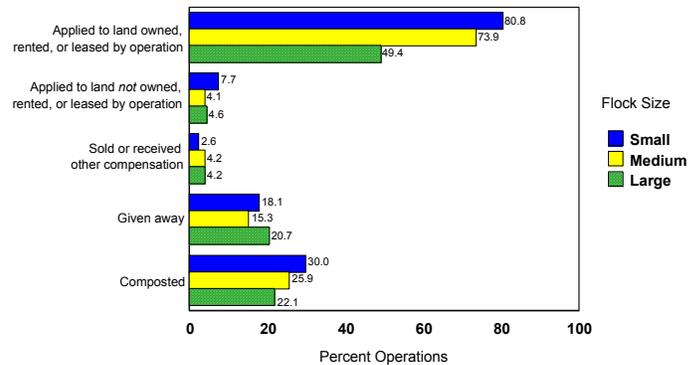


Overall, 84.3 percent of operations allowed visitors access to sheep raising areas during 2000. On these operations, only 22.6 percent had any biosecurity requirements for visitors.

Using the same equipment to handle both feed and manure may result in fecal contamination of feed, which can transmit diseases such as Johne's. Overall, only 12.7 percent of operations ever used manure handling equipment to handle feed for lambs.

The most common method of manure disposal (78.2 percent of operations) was to apply manure to land owned, rented or leased by the operation. Composting was the second most common method of manure disposal (29.0 percent of operations). Disposal methods by flock size are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Percent of Operations by Methods Used to Dispose of Manure During 2000, and by Flock Size.



Lambing Management

Nearly 90 percent (87.9) of operations provided a structure for lambing. Of these operations, the majority (51.4 percent) cleaned the lambing area at the end of lambing season. Few operations (7.6 percent) never cleaned manure and waste bedding from the lambing area.

Overall, 75.2 percent of operations usually removed placentas from pens or lambing areas. More farm flocks (81.0 percent) removed placentas than either herded/open range flocks (49.3 percent) or fenced range flocks (55.5 percent). Composting was the most common method for disposing of placentas (29.4 percent of operations).

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