

Eradication of small ruminant lentivirus infection in a goat herd

Summary

Small ruminant lentivirus causes caprine arthritis encephalitis (CAE) in goats and maedi-visna (MV) in sheep. Until recently, CAE and MV had been believed to be caused by two different viruses. However, molecular biology studies have proven that this is a single viral species causing similar chronic diseases in goats and sheep. The virus attacks immune cells, leading to the development of inflammatory lesions in various organs, predominantly the joints, lungs and udder. The disease leads to lameness, loss of body condition and eventually emaciation. The most common route of transmission is from infected dams to their offspring through colostrum and milk. The disease can also spread horizontally through long-term contact between animals. It can be transmitted between goats and sheep. Today's consumers are more aware and demanding not only with regard to the quality of animal products but as regards animal welfare as well. For this reason it is likely that eradication of small ruminant lentivirus infection will soon become an urgent matter. However, the eradication programme is lengthy, laborious, and costly, and the worst of all, not always successful.

KEY WORDS: small ruminant lentivirus, caprine arthritis encephalitis, maedi-visna