FAMACHA Training at AREC Monday

If you have sheep or goats, one of the biggest challenges you face besides predators, has to be internal parasites. One way to gauge the amount of internal parasite pressure your flock or herd is experiencing is the use of the FAMACHA scoring test.

FAMACHA scoring is a tool that matches the color of the eye mucous membranes of small ruminants with a laminated color chart showing five color categories that correspond to different levels of anemia. Anemia is a condition in which you don't have enough healthy red blood cells to carry adequate oxygen to the body's tissues.

It is used to determine the level of anemia in small ruminants by comparing the color of the eye mucous membranes with one of five colors on a laminated color chart. The FAMACHA eye scoring system is not a cure-all, or a silver bullet for dealing with internal parasites, but it can be a part of an overall parasite control strategy.

One of the deadliest parasites is the barber pole worm. The barber pole worm (Haemonchus contortus, sometimes called wireworm) is a blood-sucking gastrointestinal roundworm of ruminants and camelids that can cause serious disease, especially in sheep, goats, llamas, and alpacas. In addition to being a very dangerous parasitic disease that can cause life-threatening anemia, barber pole worm is challenging to manage due to the ever-growing issue of anthelmintic resistance (resistance to dewormers).

There was a time when it was standard practice to rely much more heavily on anthelmintics (dewormers) and to use them preventatively. At the time, the thinking was that it was best to eliminate as many worms as possible, regardless of whether an individual was showing clinical signs of parasitism or not.

Over the years, deworming recommendations, especially for small ruminants, have evolved in response to the growing issue of anthelmintic-resistant parasites. Anthelmintic-resistant barber pole worms are an issue in sheep, goats, llamas, and alpacas, though the degree of resistance and to which drug(s) worms are resistant will vary region by region and also property to property.

In the past, fecal egg counts were used to determine the parasitic load of an animal, but research has shown that fecal tests do not always reflect the clinical condition of the animal. A better solution was needed.

The FAMACHA system was originally developed in South Africa as a tool to determine which sheep and goats should be selectively dewormed based on their estimated degree of anemia. While not all anemia can be attributed to the presence of barber pole worms, it is the most common cause of anemia in small ruminants, especially during times when they are grazing on pasture.

If you would like to learn more about the FAMACHA system, Virginia Cooperative Extension is hosting a workshop this coming Monday at the Southwest VA AREC, also known as the Research Farm, just west of Glade Spring on Hillman Highway. The workshop runs from 6 PM to 8:30 PM.

A fee of $25 covers the materials of the workshop as well as a steak meal that will be served at 6. Call 276 676 6309 to reserve your spot by Monday morning.

Upcoming Events

July 29 Goat and Lamb Shows, Rich Valley Fair 10 AM

July 30 Rich Valley Beef and Dairy Feeder Show, 10 AM; Rich Valley Fair Toy Tractor Display Contest Set Up (All Day)

July 31 Rich Valley Fair Toy Tractor Display Judging (Noon)

Aug 1 Tri-State Beef Conference, Blountville TN 8 AM to 2:45 PM

Aug 16 Deadline to consign calves to September VQA Sale

Aug 20 August VQA Sale, Tri State Livestock Market 7 pm

Aug 26 VQA Steer Take Up

Aug 28 VQA Heifer Take Up

Aug 29 Hay and Forage Field Day, SWVA AREC

Sept 24 September VQA Sale

Sept 26 Smyth Washington Cattleman Meeting

Sept 30 VQA Steer Take Up

Oct 2 VQA Heifer take Up

Oct 9 Ag Field Day for 4th Graders

If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please contact Andy Overbay or Pam Testerman at (276) 783-5175/TDD (800) 828-1120) during business hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. to discuss accommodations 5 days prior to the event.