



Scrapie

What is Scrapie?

Scrapie is a fatal, degenerative disease that affects the central nervous system of sheep and goats. It is among a number of diseases classified as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE). There is no cure for scrapie.

Scrapie is not a human health concern, but it is a reportable disease according to the Texas Administrative Code. Veterinarians, veterinary diagnostic laboratories or a person having care, custody or control of an animal must report scrapie to the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) within 24 hours of diagnosis by calling 1-800-550-8242.

It is not completely understood how scrapie is passed from one animal to the next and apparently healthy sheep infected with scrapie can spread the disease. Sheep and goats are typically infected as young lambs or kids, though adult sheep and goats can become infected.

Signs and Symptoms

Signs of scrapie develop slowly in sheep and goats. It usually appears between two and five years after infection; therefore, infected animals rarely show clinical signs of infection before the age of two. Affected animals may exhibit the following signs and symptoms:

- altered behavior or temperament
- lack of coordination or swaying
- abnormal gait such as hopping or high-stepping
- weight loss despite normal appetite
- trembling or falling due to sudden stimuli
- pulling their wool or “scraping” along fences or other objects

Scrapie Testing

The only diagnostic tests currently available to determine if a sheep or goat has scrapie require brain or lymphoid tissue (lymph nodes, tonsil, third eyelid, or rectoanal lymphoid tissue). Brain or lymphoid tissues may be collected from dead animals or through a biopsy of live animals.



What if Scrapie is detected in my flock?

If scrapie is detected in your flock or your animals have been exposed to the disease, a TAHC or a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) regulatory veterinarian will work closely with you to consider all options for disease eradication using a customized plan to determine the status of your flock, eradicate the disease if it is present, and develop a monitoring schedule.

Though there is no cure or treatment for scrapie, several disease-fighting tools may be used to protect your flock. A complete epidemiological investigation will be conducted to trace animals moved into and out of the flock to determine where the infection may have originated and if exposed animals may have been sold to other producers.

Scrapie-Free Certification for Flocks

The Scrapie Flock Certification Program (SFCP) is a voluntary program providing participating producers the opportunity to protect their animals from scrapie and enhance their marketability by certifying their origin in scrapie-free flocks.

The intent of the voluntary certification program is to identify flocks that are free of scrapie by monitoring flocks over a period of 5 to 7 years or more.

Flock owners interested in certifying their flocks as “Free of Scrapie” can enroll in the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program. Information on this program may be obtained by calling Texas’ USDA-APHIS-VS office in Austin at 512-383-2400.

Continued on next page



TAHC & USDA Regulations

The USDA announced new nationwide identification and recordkeeping requirements for sheep and goats on March 25, 2019. USDA believes the final rule will result in a more effective disease eradication program. The rule provides a more flexible approach to disease investigations and affected flock management, and more consistent animal identification and recordkeeping requirements between sheep and goats.

For more information about sheep and goat identification and record keeping requirements, please call the TAHC at 512-719-0700 or visit https://www.tahc.texas.gov/news/brochures/TAHCBrochure_USDASheepandGoatIDGuide.pdf

Additional Scrapie Information Links:

USDA:

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/sheep-and-goat-health/national-scrapie-eradication-program/ct_scrapie_home

TAHC:

http://www.tahc.texas.gov/animal_health/sheep-goats/

Information provided by the
Texas Animal Health Commission
P.O. Box 12966 - Austin, TX 78711-2966
www.tahc.texas.gov
800-550-8242

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