

Maintaining optimal goat health in your flock

For producers to benefit from the growing national and international demand for live goats and goat products, it is essential to have healthy flocks. **Dr Alan Rowe**, chief state veterinarian for the Harry Gwala District Municipality, shares tips on goat health management. **Lloyd Phillips** reports.

The profitability of a goat enterprise depends largely on the animals' health and productivity. It is crucial, therefore, that a goat farmer has the skills to identify an animal in poor health, diagnose the illness and treat it, or obtain assistance from other knowledgeable goat farmers, state animal health officials or private vets. The key is to act swiftly.

"While the advice that follows can be helpful, the diagnoses and treatment policies are not carved in stone. They need to be tested and adapted where necessary because of the varying goat production conditions across the country," cautions Dr Alan Rowe, chief state veterinarian for the Harry Gwala District Municipality.

that whatever disease they are suffering from does not spread to healthy animals. Treat every sick goat and keep records of the treatments given. Animals that are often ill should be culled.

"Weak animals cost money, and may also pass on their weak genetics to offspring,"

Rowe explains.

Be aware of common goat diseases – and their symptoms – prevalent in the area, and implement an appropriate preventative vaccination programme. Vaccines are not always 100% effective,



DR ALAN ROWE

every year in spring (September) and again one month later. Other vaccinations should be given only if a problem is identified, for example enzootic abortion and goat/sheep brucellosis."

DEALING WITH WORMS

Internal parasitic worms are common in goats. Signs of their presence are pale mucous membranes such as the inside of the eyelids, vulva and gums; bottle jaw (swelling under the jaw); decreased appetite; weight loss; poor condition; diarrhoea; sneezing or mucus in the nose; and segments of tapeworm visible in droppings. Compile a checklist and inspect the animals at least once a month. If some goats are more susceptible to worms than others, consider culling them.

Deworm the flock at least twice a year – in autumn (April) and spring – using products that target roundworm and liver fluke.

"Kids should be dewormed at least once with a product for tapeworm, especially if [fragments] of tapeworm are visible in their droppings. All goats should be treated for nasal worm if they are sneezing a lot, or if worms [maggots] or mucus are observed coming out of the nose," he adds.

Where possible, deworm only those goats showing signs of worm infestation, not the entire flock. This saves money, and decreases the possibility of worms developing resistance to deworming medication.

"If you don't know which dewormer to use, seek advice from a local animal health expert. It's a good idea to

WEAK GOATS COST MONEY, AND THEIR GENETICS CAN BE PASSED ON – CULL THESE ANIMALS

Prevention is always better than cure, and it is therefore important that any goat introduced to an existing flock be disease-free and healthy. Begin by ensuring that goats always have access to clean drinking water, and enough and the correct quality of grazing, browsing and supplementary feed.

VACCINATION PROGRAMME

Coupled with the requirements above, it is imperative to have a strict vaccination programme to control common diseases, as well as internal and external parasites. Isolate sick goats, so

however, so animals should be monitored daily, even following vaccinations.

Rowe stresses that goat farmers should administer a combination vaccine against clostridial diseases. These include lamb dysentery, pulpy kidney, tetanus, black quarter, clostridial metritis, blood gut and pasteurilla pneumonia.

"Multivax-P Plus is ideal for this purpose. Inject it under the skin of the inner thigh when goats are four to five months old and then again one month later. All adult goats should be vaccinated with Multivax-P Plus