

Health and Disease Issues

Prolapse (rectal)

Predisposing Factors:

- Gender: Ewe lambs are more likely to have a rectal prolapse than wether lambs. Females lay down more internal fat, particularly in the pelvis. When a lamb strains or coughs, fat can't hold the rectal tissue and hind gut in place.
- Diet: Rectal prolapses occur most commonly in feedlot lambs and other lambs being finished on high concentrate diets. Overly fat lambs are more prone to prolapsing. Inadequate fibre within a diet may lead to constipation, increased straining and ultimately prolapse.
- Age: Lambs in the post-weaning period are more likely to experience a rectal prolapse than young lambs or adult sheep.
- Coughing: Chronic coughing, due to infection or dusty feeds, may lead to an increased incidence of rectal prolapses.
- Diarrhoea: Coccidiosis and diarrhoea cause irritation and straining, which may cause prolapsing in susceptible lambs.
- Genetics: Some breeds or crosses are more prone to prolapse
- Short tail docks: When tails are docked too short (above the 3rd palpable joint), muscles attached to the tail bone are weakened and prolapse may occur.



Signs and Symptoms:

Rectal prolapse in lambs usually begins as a small round area protruding, often when the lamb coughs or lies down. The prolapse will swell and tears in the rectum are commonly seen. Over time, the length of prolapsed rectum increases.

Control and Prevention:

Balanced diets with adequate fibre to reduce the risk of constipation and bowel irritation should reduce the incidence of rectal prolapse. Minimising the use of dusty feeds and dust levels within a feedlot will also reduce coughing.

Treatment:

While treatment may be successful euthanasia is recommended.

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (July 2013). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the user's independent adviser.

