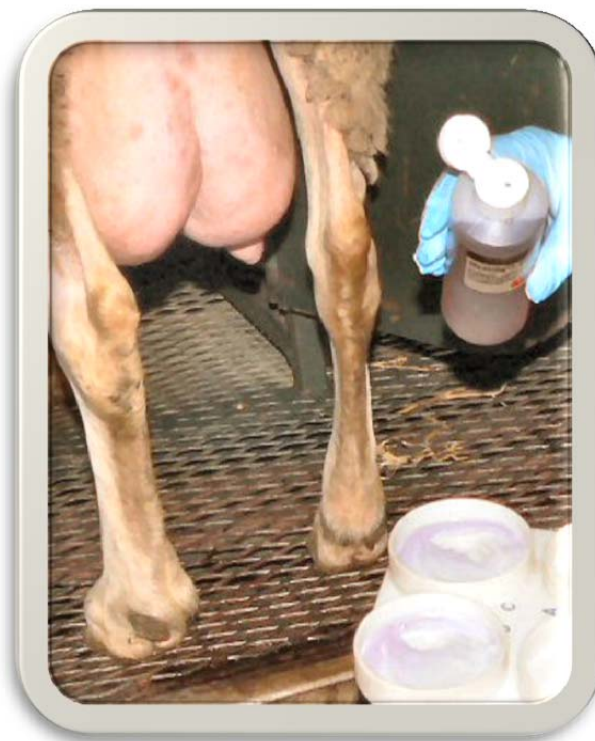


A Guide to Udder Health For Dairy Sheep



To assist producers, veterinarians, extension and dairy support personnel in the production of quality sheep milk

November, 2013

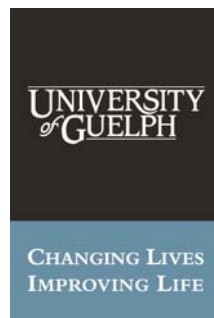


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WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE?

Dairy sheep producers want to produce the highest quality product – specifically, milk – for its consumers. Part of the process of achieving this goal is to maintain the health of the animals that produce that milk, and in particular the health of the udder.

This guide is designed to help educate producers, veterinarians, and extension and dairy support personnel on how to best do that. The information in this guide has come from a number of sources but includes extension information from both the small ruminant and cow sectors, and new information from the latest research from around the world.

The self-assessment quiz is designed to help you determine if you understand the information and to remind you of the important points. To get the most out of this guide, we recommend that you complete all of the sections and assess your understanding as you go along.

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE TERM “QUALITY MILK”?

Quality milk is defined by its characteristics:

- The level of bacteria in the milk;
- The number of somatic cells (which are a measure of inflammation or mastitis);
- The freezing point as affected by water contamination;
- Presence of residues of veterinary drugs and other chemicals or toxin; and
- By its colour, flavour and odour

Most processors have standards and some provinces have legislation governing what is acceptable quality for sheep milk. **None of the components of this guide are part of a regulatory process** but its contents will help you to understand how to produce better quality milk, with particular reference to the health of the udder. Please understand that regulations and guidelines can be regionally different and it is **your responsibility to know what the regulatory levels are for your region and markets.**

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE TERM “UDDER HEALTH”?

The term “udder health” refers to those measures, which keep the udder healthy so that it can produce high quality milk. But of course, the udder is attached to the ewe and the ewe lives with other sheep – so really “udder health” refers to those practices designed to keep the flock healthy so that the ewes can produce healthy milk.

Mastitis is the number one reason for poor udder health and will be a major focus of this course, but overall ewe health also influences the ability for it to produce quality milk. Udder health is an integral component of producing quality milk – in terms of the level of somatic cells (a measure of mastitis), some aspects of bacterial counts, and of course residues of drugs in the milk. So in summary, this course will emphasize milk quality within the context of udder health.

HOW THIS GUIDE IS ORGANIZED

The guide is organized as follows:

Section I	Normal lactation and flock health
Section II	Mastitis - What causes it and how it is detected
Section III	Milking management
Section IV	Proper maintenance and use of milking equipment
Section V	Milk quality
Section VI	Treatment and control of mastitis
Section VII	Monitoring udder health and goal setting
Appendix I	Words or phrases definitions
Appendix II	Self-assessment quizzes
Appendix III	References and additional reading

The page number in the upper right-hand corner is colour-coordinated by section as above. Within each section there are many sub-sections that address the material in detail. Some words or phrases may be new to you so we have provided some definitions to help with understanding. The self-assessment quiz is provided in a separate section so that multiple persons can use the guide. References and additional reading suggestions are provided in an appendix so that you can understand where this information came from and find more detailed information if you wish.

NOTES

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