



Cleon's Corner

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Lamb Epididymitis



Ram lambs are subject to an epididymitis that can cause various degrees of infertility. This is seen in young virgin rams; lambs or yearlings that are congregated for feeding and before going into a production system. This is usually diagnosed at the time of the semen evaluation when palpated or microscopically. With a subclinical ram lamb epididymitis there will be numerous white blood cells in the semen sample (Figure 1). It may also be caught by the sifting team at ram sales upon scrotal palpation.

There are several organisms which cause epididymitis in ram lambs. The most common of these being *Histophilus (Hemophilus) somnus*, *Actinobacillus seminus*, and *Actinobacillus actinomycetum-comitans*.

These organisms are normal flora of the urethra and prepuce and tend to infect the epididymis at puberty possibly related to change in hormone levels. They are not transmitted from one ram to another but occasionally in some groups of lambs, the incidence of disease can be as high as 20%. Tetracycline's are the treatment of choice but must be administered prior to epididymal lesions to be effective. Some operations use a low level of tetracycline in the feed for control.

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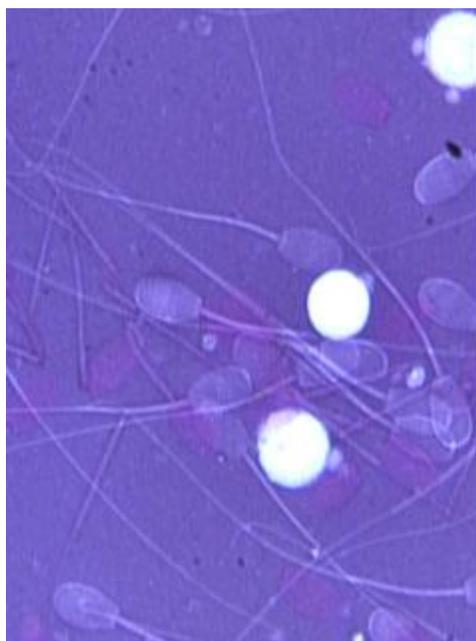


Figure 1: White blood cells among semen cells.

Since treatment can affect the semen quality it is highly recommended to have a semen evaluation performed on these rams again in 30-45 days post treatment. If white blood cells persist in the semen sample it should be cultured for further diagnostics and a *Brucella ovis**ELISA serum test as well.

*For further information on *Brucella ovis* please see the [Ram Epididymitis article](#) on Cleon's Corner.

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