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Deworming Small Ruminants and Camelids. When to deworm? What product? How often should I be deworming? These are common questions and concerns with owners that usually spark a good discussion on parasite management. Internal parasites in goats, sheep, alpacas and llamas are a major concern.

The hard part is finding a balance between deworming the animals that need it while also maintaining refugia. Refugia may be a new term for some people, the idea is to maintain a population of worms that are susceptible to the deworming products that we use.

Parasite resistance is becoming more and more of an issue. To attempt to slow development of resistance we need to use two management techniques to determine WHO should be dewormed: FAMACHA. The FAMACHA scoring system is used to find animals affected by the barberpole worm, *Haemonchus contortus*. This worm sucks blood and causes anemia, or low red blood cell counts, in animals which then leads to decreased activity and energy.

The FAMACHA score is based off of the color of the mucous membranes – bright pink-red is a healthy animal whereas white means a severely anemic and sick animal. Our veterinarians are trained in the FAMACHA scoring method and it is a quick screening tool for your whole herd. Fecal egg counts. This method monitors for other internal parasites that do not suck blood but also cause sick animals. Besides being able to determine which type of parasite eggs are present, this method also allows you to see how much of a parasite load is present in the individual animal.

Another benefit is that we can repeat the FEC 14 days after deworming to see if that particular dewormer is effective. Choosing the deworming product ideally is based upon the history of the farm and efficacy of that product (proven with FEC). Rotating between products will speed up the development of parasite resistance so one dewormer should be used until it no longer works – based on FECs, FAMACHA scoring, and clinical signs.

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The best time to deworm is in the spring as the parasite eggs hatch and infect young animals or reinfect the herd and also in the fall once the ground freezes. Giving the correct amount of dewormer is also important so determining each animal's weight is ideal. The easiest way to do this for small ruminants is show in this picture:



Keeping a record of an individual animal's age, weight, FAMACHA score, and FEC helps to monitor changes in each animal over time and catch any resistance or problems early. Coastal Elite's Dr. Mahalchick and Dr. Stierns would be more than happy to answer any questions you have and perform a herd health check. Another resource is the website Wormx.info that has resources on managing parasite resistance, deworming, and other related topics.

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