

For further clarification on accepted animal husbandry practices for sheep, please contact the Vermont Agency of Agriculture's Animal Health Section at (802) 828-2421

If you suspect animal cruelty or neglect please visit:

www.ReportAnimalCruelty.com

Or call
(877) 9-HUMANE



The Vermont Humane Federation's Animal Cruelty Response Coalition

A state-wide network of professionals coordinating Vermont's efforts to prevent and respond to animal cruelty through communication, education, and training.

Members include:

- The VT Humane Federation
- The VT Veterinary Medical Association
- The VT Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets
- The VT League of Cities & Towns
- The VT Farm Bureau
- The Green Mountain Dairy Farmers Cooperative
- The VT Sheriffs Association
- The VT Police Chiefs Association
- The VT Constables Association
- The VT Animal Control Officers Association
- The VT Agency of Human Services

For more information visit
www.vermonthumane.org

Caring for Sheep



Vermont's Recommendations and Requirements

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Sheep: The Basics

Terminology

Female - Ewe

Male - Ram

Castrated male - Wether

Young sheep, either sex - Lamb

The act of giving birth—Lambing

Sheep Care

- Fresh, clean water should be available at all times. If ewes are lambing in small pens (jugs), water should be removed during active labor. Fresh water should be provided immediately after lambing.
- Sheep are ruminants and should have a forage-based diet, with supplemental grains as needed. Prepared or textured grain mixes should be formulated especially for sheep so as to avoid any added copper. Fermented feeds can be used with caution to avoid spoilage as sheep are more sensitive to listeria than cattle.
- Don't overfeed grain and other concentrates to wethers, who are especially prone to urinary calculi, resulting in an inability to urinate.
- Trace mineral supplementation is important as Vermont is a selenium-deficient state. A loose trace mineral supplement including but not limited to selenium and iodine with salt formulated for sheep should be available at all times.
- Any and all diet changes should be made gradually to avoid overconsumption/indigestion.

Shelter

Vermont law requires that sheep are provided with shelter that protects them. A stand of trees, shed, or barn can all be considered shelter. Sheep must also be provided with a dry place to rest.

Additional Recommendations

- Parasitism is a **major** cause of death in sheep, usually during the grazing season. Routine de-worming of all animals is **not** recommended because of the limited availability of medications and documented parasite resistance. Contact your veterinarian or extension agent to develop a strategic de-worming protocol suited to your particular situation.
- Sheep can be vaccinated for rabies and clostridial disease (including tetanus) annually.
- Sheep should have their hooves trimmed as needed to avoid lameness and abnormal growth.
- Fleeced sheep must be sheared annually to prevent matting and infestation with maggots (known as flystrike). During the grazing months it's important to examine all animals at least monthly to determine parasite load.
- If docking tails and castrating rams, it should be done at an early age (<1 week) to minimize pain and trauma. Consult your veterinarian for proper procedures.

Common Concerns

Appearance of Animal

Too thin. With an unshorn (unclipped) sheep, you must *feel* the body of the animal to determine if it is underweight; maggots near genital area or skin folds; excessive hoof length; limping; animals "walking" on knees; bottle jaw (swelling under the jaw) can be an indication of parasitism; horns growing back into face or skull.

Housing Conditions

The lack of food, water, or shelter (natural or man made) are not acceptable practices. Overcrowding or insufficient feeding area may cause the less aggressive sheep to be excluded from the food source. Overcrowding in an unventilated barn can lead to pneumonia.

Behavior

Dull, minimally responsive; drooping head; fleece or hair loss in breeds that do not shed; straining to urinate (saw-horse stance). If any of these elements are present, call a veterinarian to examine the animals.

