

# Things “ewe” should know about your sheep flock



With their size, ease of handling, and low cost, sheep can be a wonderful asset to your farm or acreage. However, just like other livestock or pets, sheep require preventative care to ensure their health and welfare is provided for.

As with cattle and horses, sheep hooves grow continually. They will require regular hoof trimming to prevent lameness and keep their feet healthy. How often trimming is required will depend on the environmental conditions and terrain the sheep are pastured on. Talk with your veterinarian to discuss how often hoof trimming is necessary for your flock.

Vaccines and regular deworming can keep your flock healthy and prevent disease occurrence. Deworming allows sheep to utilize their feed more efficiently and provides better gut health. However, parasite resistance to dewormers is becoming more common. It is important to remember that sheep vaccine and deworming needs differ from other species and will also vary depending on your location. Consult with your veterinarian to develop a deworming and vaccination program specific to your flock.

Shearing sheep and tail docking are also important considerations. Many breeds of sheep require their wool to be sheared to minimize overheating, reduce external parasite load, and to help prevent fly strike. Fly strike is a condition that occurs during the warmer months when blow flies are laying eggs. These flies will lay their eggs on soiled hindquarters of sheep. When the eggs hatch into larvae they feed on the skin and flesh of sheep. Sheep with open wounds, infected skin, or heavy fecal or urine contamination of the fleece are most susceptible to flystrike. Unfortunately, sheep can die of a secondary infection. Docking lambs' tails and shearing at least once per year can help to prevent this condition.

Predators are a concern year-round, but sometimes flocks are more susceptible on pasture. Guardian animals such as dogs, llamas or donkeys can be useful. It is also important to note the predation programming available in SK. The SCIC Predation Compensation and Prevention Programs can be of assistance to producers who lose animals due to predators and will even pay a portion of the cost of a livestock guardian dog.

