

## SECTION VI-8 CONTROLLING A STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS MASTITIS PROBLEM IN A FLOCK

### 8. CONTROLLING A *STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS* MASTITIS PROBLEM IN THE FLOCK

*Staphylococcus aureus* has been mentioned many times in this course and it is the most common cause of clinical mastitis, and one of the most important mastitis pathogens overall in sheep. *Staph. aureus* is the most common cause of gangrenous mastitis. If your flock is experiencing cases of this – even one or two per year – it is likely that many more ewes are actually infected in the flock.

Because it is contagious from ewe-to-ewe and from people-to-ewe, identifying infected ewes, preventing transmission and appropriate treatment and culling of infected animals are all crucial to its control. Infected ewes are often called “staph” ewes. The following measures are recommended with input from the flock veterinarian:

- Culture all ewes with clinical and sub-clinical mastitis to detect “staph” ewes
- Identify “staph” ewes (Section VI. 3.2.2) and milk separately, either by bucket milker but ideally after the rest of the flock is milked
- Aggressively treat on the advice of your veterinarian - newly identified “staph” ewes, particularly if they are recently fresh ewe lambs
- Perform follow-up culturing to determine if cured
- Blanket dry treat all ewes as not all “staph” ewes can be identified by culture
- Always wear gloves to milk ewes to prevent transmission from people to ewes
- Do not allow lambs to nurse ewes, particularly if infected with contagious ecthyma (orf, soremouth) (Section II.4.5.2)
- Prep the udder and teats carefully as outlined in Section III.1.1.
- Make sure milking equipment is properly calibrated and maintained to prevent vacuum fluctuations and back-jetting of the milk from ewe-to-ewe
- If new cases of “staph” continue to happen, consider culturing the entire milking flock to detect all “staph” ewes
- Culture all “staph” ewes at lambing to determine if dry treatment has cured the infection
- Cull ewes with a history of clinical mastitis due to “staph”, particularly if udder damage remains. This includes ewes with a history of gangrenous mastitis
- Cull ewes which do not respond to treatment, i.e. are still culture positive for “staph”
- Monitor the flock using bulk tank culture (See Section II.6)

Fig. 1

