Nephrosis in Lambs

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Nephrosis occurs sporadically in young lambs between two and four weeks-old, and in growing lambs between two and four months-old; cases in the latter age group often appear after an outbreak of coccidiosis and/or nematodirosis. The cause has not been resolved although a toxic insult is considered the probable aetiology.

- Occurs sporadically in young lambs
- Follows an outbreak of coccidiosis and/or nematodirosis
- A toxic insult is considered the probable cause

During the early stages affected lambs are depressed, do not suck, and appear thirsty as they frequently stand with their heads over a water trough but drink little. The lambs appear gaunt with little abdominal content and become emaciated. The rectal temperature is normal. There maybe evidence of chronic faecal staining of the perineum. The faeces are often soft and malodorous.

**Signs:**
- Very depressed
- Do not suck
- Appear thirsty
- Appear gaunt with little abdominal content
- Become emaciated
- Faeces are often soft and malodorous

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**Fig 1:** Advanced nephrosis in a growing lamb.

**Fig 2:** Advanced nephrosis affecting a growing lamb (left) compared to normal sized lamb (right).

**Fig 3:** Advanced nephrosis affecting a growing lamb (right) compared to its normal sized twin lamb (left).

**Fig 4:** Affected lambs are very depressed, do not suck, and appear thirsty as they frequently stand with their heads over a water trough.
Differential diagnoses
The important differential diagnoses your veterinary surgeon will consider include
- Coccidiosis,
- Nematodirosis,
- Starvation.
- Liver abscesses (hepatic necrobacillosis)
- Chronic suppurative pneumonia,
- Chronic peritonitis

Diagnosis
The diagnosis is based upon the clinical findings and results of tests your veterinary surgeon may undertake. Diligent stockmanship will identify affected lambs which should be euthanased once they have failed to respond to anthelmintic/anticoccidial/antibiotic therapy. Necropsy reveals very pale swollen kidneys.

Treatment
There is no treatment and affected lambs are euthanased for welfare reasons.

Control measures
There are no recognised control measures. Control of nematodirosis (clean grazing or appropriately-timed preventive anthelmintic treatment) and coccidiosis (clean environment and possible preventive treatment/in-feed medication) are detailed on the NADIS website.
- Control nematodirosis
- Control coccidiosis
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