



Iceberg Diseases Bulletin #3

Ovine Johne's Disease

Ovine Johne's Disease (OJD)

Johne's disease is caused by a bacteria called *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies *paratuberculosis* (MAP). It is found in many animals including sheep, goats, cattle, deer and camelids and is known as a 'chronic wasting disease.' The bacteria causes the intestinal lining to thicken, severely impairing nutrient and water absorption. The disease has a long incubation period, and clinical signs usually start to appear in middle aged sheep (3-4 years old). Lambs are at the highest risk of picking up Johne's disease. Adult sheep are more resistant to becoming infected.

Signs You May See In Your Flock

- Chronic weight loss (leading to emaciation)
- Poor quality and 'open' fleeces
- Bottle jaw (seen in picture)
- Abdominal swelling (due to fluid) especially on the lower right side



Image credit: Hal Thompson and Richard Irvine

Disease Diagnosis

- Post-mortem- most effective for animals showing clinical signs
- Faecal test using culture or PCR (this being the preferred method, culture can be very slow)
- ELISA test using blood samples

Always consult your private vet on what tests may be the most appropriate for use if Johne's is suspected in your flock.

How Infection Spreads

- Lambs ingesting faeces through contaminated bedding, udders, feeding equipment, pasture and water
- Can be acquired in the womb
- From pasture- the MAP bacteria can survive for months on pasture
- Via colostrum/milk

Image credit: Hal Thompson and Richard Irvine

