USE OF LONG-LASTING OXYTETRACYCLIN TO PREVENT INFECTIOUS KERATOCONJUNCTIVITIS IN LAMBS

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Infectious keratoconjunctivitis (IKC) is recognized in world-wide as a common condition affecting the eyes of domestic sheep and goats. It is a combined inflammation of the cornea and conjunctiva. The first clinical signs are hyperemia, serous lachrymation, increased blinking and blepharospasm. Economic loss is the result of weight loss or decreased weight gain or increased costs with medication, time and handling required for treatment. The aim of this study was to evaluate the use of long-lasting oxytetracyclin (20 mg/kg/SC/SOD), totalizing two applications, in a feedlot during two years, as prophylactic treatment of this disease. The first application was administered when the lambs entered the feedlot. During 2008 and 2009 the prophylactic therapy was performed and the results were better than those from the previous years (2004 to 2007). The percentage of the sick animals was 51.25% and 54.16%, respectively, lower than the previous years when these rates were approximately 100%. With the use of the prophylactic therapy the clinical manifestation was less severe. The lambs had inflammation score 1 or 2

(1= hyperemia of the palpebral and the bulbar conjunctival vessels;
2= hyperemia of the palpebral and the bulbar conjunctival vessels and mild keratitis), and only one more administration of the antibiotic was necessary.

In contrast, in the previous years, four applications of oxytetracycline were performed because of severity of the disease reached clinical scores 3 or 4

(3= congestion of the palpebral and the bulbar conjunctival vessels and keratitis;
4= congestion of the palpebral and the bulbar conjunctival vessels and corneal ulcer and vision loss).

If case of recurrence the animals were treated with florphenicol. We conclude that the use of prophylactic antibiotics to prevent IKC was effective to reduce the economic losses resulting from weight loss and minimize the costs of treatments, reducing stress and thus improving the welfare of animals.