

Cheesy gland or CLA

(*Caseous lymphadenitis*)

factsheet

Key messages

- Cheesy gland is a contagious disease in sheep and goats that can have significant economic impacts at slaughter through trimming of carcasses and carcass contamination.
- The bacterial disease spreads through contact with infected animals.
- No cure is available for infected sheep — vaccination is the best control measure currently available.

What is cheesy gland?

Cheesy gland (*Caseous lymphadenitis* or CLA) is a contagious bacterial disease in sheep and goats caused by the bacterium *Corynebacterium pseudotuberculosis*. It produces abscesses in the lymph glands throughout the body (see Figure 1). Common locations of superficial abscesses in sheep are the crease between shoulder and neck, the flank fold and the groin area.

The pus is a typical yellow–green colour, which later dries out and becomes ‘cheesy’ looking.

Economic impact

Ruptured abscesses contaminate wool and meat of affected animals. These abscesses must be trimmed out at the abattoir, reducing total carcass yield.

Where multiple abscesses are present, carcasses will be condemned.

Infection with cheesy gland also can cause a wasting disease in sheep, which will decrease wool production and growth rates.

Disease spread

The cheesy gland bacteria enter the blood stream, via contaminated fluid or organic matter, through unbroken skin and wounds.

The most common opportunities for disease spread occur during contact with other animals at shearing, yarding, tail docking, dipping and other management activities.

Sheep with infected lungs cough onto others, infecting them directly. Sheep also can breathe in infected dust, especially in old yards.

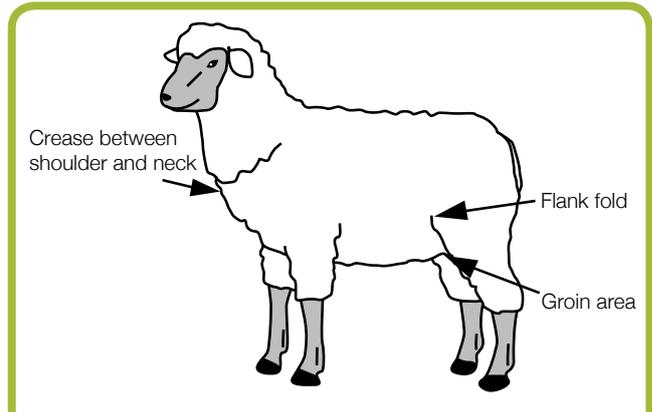


Figure 1: Common site of abscesses in lymph nodes infected by cheesy gland.

Diagnosis

Abscesses and lymph nodes anywhere in the body are a typical indication of cheesy gland and are not usually found until the animal is slaughtered.

While grass seed abscesses can look similar to cheesy gland lesions, they tend to have greener pus.

For accurate diagnosis, pus from a suspicious abscess needs to be tested in the laboratory.



Photo: Phil Jarvie

Carcass impact: the pustular abscesses typical of cheesy gland cause significant economic impact during processing. Multiple abscesses can lead to the entire carcass being condemned.

Treatment and prevention

There is no treatment for infected sheep, as antibiotics do not work on cheesy gland abscesses — prevention and management is the best approach. The recommended management options include:

- Vaccinating with a vaccine that contains a cheesy gland component. Lambs should get two doses, at least a month apart, and then receive annual boosters as adult sheep. This will not cure infected sheep, but will protect unaffected sheep from infection.
- Segregate any animals with open abscesses to prevent disease spread.
- Use clean equipment, yards and sheds — especially at shearing and lamb marking.
- Disinfect contaminated equipment, yards and sheds properly.
- Shear animals in age groups — starting with the youngest if possible.
- Release animals from yards as soon as possible to minimise time spent in close contact with other sheep — especially after shearing, dipping and marking.
- Use correct lamb marking techniques to hasten healing. Put the lambs onto clean grass. Mark the lambs in the paddock rather than contaminated yards.
- Do not plunge-dip or shower-dip infected sheep as the bacteria can live in dipping fluid and infect other sheep.
- Do not dip off shears. 🗑️



Photo: Catriona Nicholls

Vaccinate early: Vaccinating lambs with a product that includes a cheesy gland component is the best way to prevent the disease infecting your flock.

For further information:

Contact your local DPI/PWE Animal Health officer or local veterinary practitioner; or phone DPI/PWE toll free helpline on 1300 368 550.

FOR ANY SIGNS OF UNUSUAL OR SERIOUS ANIMAL DISEASE, RING THE DISEASE WATCH HOTLINE: 1800 675 888.

Acknowledgements:

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