

Update on CRD aka “The Snots”

By Stacey Byers, DVM

As was previously reported in the December 2007 issue of Camelid Quarterly, many North American camelids suffered a respiratory infection outbreak last autumn. The disease ran unchecked across many areas of the continent before ending with the winter season.

Both llamas and alpacas exhibited clinical signs consistent with an upper respiratory tract infection. The infection was given the descriptive name of “the snots” by owners due to an abundant nasal discharge. Most affected animals recovered uneventfully, however a small percentage developed complications including pneumonia, stillbirths, premature parturition, and death. The infection outbreak would appear in an area for several weeks, and taper off. Unfortunately, some owners continued to transport, show, and failed to quarantine sick animals, which contributed to propagation of the disease into unexposed areas. This did not account for all outbreaks however, suggesting other means of transmission such as wind, insects, or other species (including humans) acting as potential carriers.

Diagnostic laboratories identified a variety of infectious agents as potential causes through the examination of blood, nasal swabs, and tissues. However, no single organism was reported to be the primary agent. Most animals recovered uneventfully regardless of the use of antibiotics, increasing suspicion that a viral agent was the cause.

Since an infectious agent was not identified, it can not be predicted if there will be another outbreak this summer. Because many animals were apparently exposed during the outbreaks, it is possible these animals developed a degree of immunity, however, this cannot be guaranteed. Therefore,

owners should prepare for a repeat of the clinical signs, especially in areas that did not experience outbreaks previously.

If animals begin to show signs of upper respiratory tract infections (nasal discharge, coughing, anorexia, lethargy, elevated rectal temperature, etc.), please contact your veterinarian. Judicious use of antibiotics is recommended since they did not appear to change the outcome in the majority of animals previously affected. Nevertheless, any animal that appears to be experiencing severe clinical signs should be examined by a veterinarian and treated appropriately.

The following recommendations from the initial article are still applicable and apply to any infectious disease outbreak. Implement or continue good management practices and biosecurity protocols. This has been repeatedly discussed due to the recent bovine viral diarrhea virus problems, *Eimeria macusaniensis* re-emergence, and other communicable diseases. Do not transport sick animals to shows or breeding farms and realize that veterinarians checking animals at shows will deny entry to sick animals. Do not transport “at risk” animals, including dams with nursing crias and pregnant animals, if an infectious disease outbreak occurs. Quarantine new

and animals returning to the farm. Monitor appetite, recumbency, and attitude of late-stage pregnant animals and contact your veterinarian if any changes are noted. Isolate sick animals from healthy animals. Provide supportive care to sick animals by minimizing stress, providing high quality feed and clean water, and ensuring adequate shelter during inclement weather or at night. Finally, attend to sick animals after working with healthy animals. Never share equipment between the sick pen and healthy pens, wash your hands, and change clothes after handling sick animals.

Please contact your veterinarian if you have any questions or concerns.

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About the Author

Dr Stacey Byers graduated from Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine in 2005 and remained at WSU to complete an agriculture animal internship. She is currently in the middle of her residency, focused on camelid and agriculture animal internal medicine. Her primary research interests are neonatology and infectious diseases. Stacey may be contacted at staceyr@vetmed.wsu.edu

