

# TRANSMISSION

The transmission of *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* can happen in a second with a simple friendly nose to nose touch between a wild sheep and a domestic sheep. Wild and domestic sheep are extremely close genetically, but they have totally different problems and reactions to respiratory diseases and illnesses. A high risk for transmission of *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* is during mating season, also known as rut. The rams wander away from their herds in search of ewes and stumble across herds of domestic ewes.

When they move in close to the domestic ewes and have close contact that is when *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* can be transmitted. Sadly, a ram is most likely infected and will now take it back to his herd. Wild sheep may also be lured to domestic pasture from normally occurring sheep noises.

Farmers are able to stop rams and other wild sheep from coming in contact with their herds by implementing some further measures such as electric fencing, a double perimeter fence, and livestock guardian dogs. Being aware of bighorn sheep sightings in your area is important to know so you can prevent them from coming in contact with your flock.

A good way to know if your domestic flock is a carrier of *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* is by simply getting them tested. The testing process is very simple and there is no danger or pain involved for your animal. I experienced this testing first hand in 2019 when my market lamb and ewe lamb were tested. A simple deep nasal swab performed by a veterinarian is then sent for diagnostic testing, and you get your results a few weeks later. My ewe lamb tested negative and my market lamb was inconclusive. But it was only because it took five tries and the swab wasn't able to go all the way up. A simple treatment for your domestic sheep is available if your sheep do have *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* but research is still being done to improve treatment. If your flock does have *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* you do not need to kill your flock, you simply need to treat them.

The fact that simple nose to nose contact can cause death to wild sheep is crazy to me. I think it is so WEIRD that sheep that are almost completely genetically the same can have such a different reaction to *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae*. The way that *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* is transmitted is well understood and we know ways to prevent it, but the general public and farmers should learn more. Even if people think they know a lot about it they can still learn more as research evolves. I think this problem should get a lot more awareness because the general public has no idea. I didn't.

I really hope that this has taught you about the transmission of *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae*. from domestic sheep to wild sheep and that you feel confident in sharing this information to spread more awareness.