

Timely Topics

Do's and Don'ts of FAMACHA Scoring©

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The FAMACHA© system is an important tool in identifying and selectively deworming sheep and goats affected by barber pole worm infection. Selective deworming minimizes drug use and slows the rate of development of drug resistance. It can also aid in selective breeding decisions by identifying those animals that are most susceptible to barber pole worm infection.

However, as we all know, there are right ways and wrong ways to do things.

Here are some Do's and Don'ts of FAMACHA© scoring.



COVER-PUSH-PULL-POP

Image by Cristina Sotomaior

1. HOW OFTEN SHOULD SHEEP/GOATS BE CHECKED?

DO: If <10% of herd/flock scores in categories 4 or 5:

- Every 2 weeks during peak Haemonchus transmission season. Susceptible animals can go downhill rapidly when worm numbers are high (warm, moist conditions / summer months).
- Outside of the months of peak transmission season for Haemonchus, when temperatures are cooler, this interval could be extended to 3-4 weeks.
- During winter the interval can be extended, but remember that ewes/does may develop problems with the barber pole worm when lambing/kidding coincides with arrested parasites resuming development, and they should be checked more often.

DO: If >10% of flock/herd scores in categories 4 or 5:

- Recheck weekly

DON'T: Wait until a problem develops to check animals with your FAMACHA© card.

2. LOCATION! LOCATION! LOCATION!

DO: Always check eyes outside in direct, natural light. If options are limited due to handling needs, an area of the barn where natural light enters directly in the morning or afternoon (such as a door or window) is acceptable. When scoring, there does not need to be bright sunshine, but it should be performed in full daylight.

DON'T: Score your animals in the shade or under artificial light.



3. Technique

DO: Use proper FAMACHA© scoring technique to expose the lower eye mucous membranes and match them to the equivalent color on the FAMACHA© card (Figure 1). COVER, PUSH, PULL, POP is a 4-step process describing the proper technique.

1. COVER the eye by rolling the upper eyelid down over the eyeball.
2. PUSH down on the eyeball. An easy way to tell if you are using enough pressure is that you should see that the eyelashes of the upper eyelid are curling up over your thumb.
3. PULL down the lower eyelid.
4. POP! The mucous membranes will pop into view. Make sure that you do not score the inner surface of the lower eyelid, but rather score the bed of mucous membranes.

DO: Repeat the process with the other eye because it may be different. Use the higher score so any error is on the side of caution.

DON'T: Try to expose the membranes by just pulling down the lower eyelid.

DON'T: Use half numbers. Round up!!

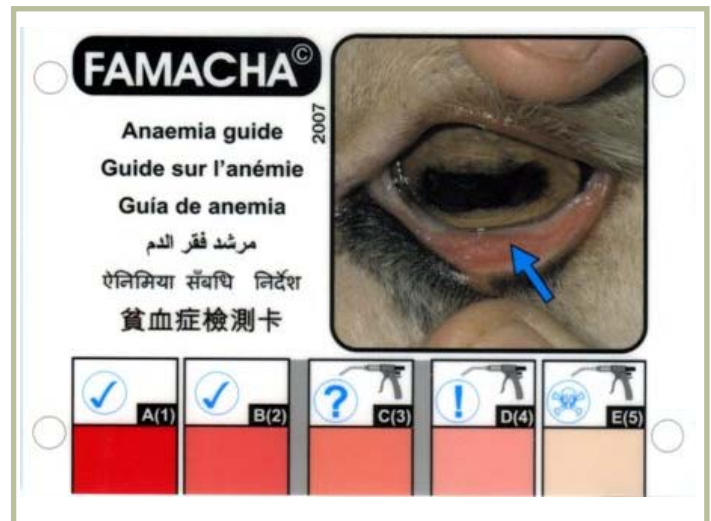
4. Maintaining the FAMACHA© card

DO: Store in dark place when not in use because the card will fade with time.

DO: Replace card after 12 to 24 months of use (varies depending upon use and storage conditions).



Timely Topics were written by members of the American Consortium for Small Ruminant Parasite Control. They are for educational and informational purposes only. They are not meant as a substitute for professional advice from a veterinarian or other animal science professionals. Some treatments described in the articles may require extra label drug use, which requires a valid veterinarian-client-patient relationship.



DO: Keep a spare card in a location protected from light (compare with the card in use).

DON'T: Try to reproduce the FAMACHA© card colors or score from memory of the colors or by printing the card off of the internet.

For more information, including our demonstration video on FAMACHA© scoring, visit our website: <http://web.uri.edu/sheepngoat>. The video can also be viewed directly from the URI YouTube channel page (UniversityOfRI): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5rcuvVG56Q>.

At this point in the gastrointestinal (GI) parasite conversation we all know that *Haemonchus contortus*, a.k.a. the barber pole worm, is one bad player, having the dubious distinction of being the most pathogenic GI worm infecting sheep and goats worldwide. One of the major milestones, in our fight against this parasite, was the development of the FAMACHA© anemia scoring technique.