

- **Lancing (opening)** - When the abscess is mature ("ripe") lancing is done by making an incision at the lowest point of the swelling and applying pressure to drain the pus.
- **Flushing** - done on the pocket using very dilute hydrogen peroxide to help breakdown any pus remnants followed by dilute lugols iodine to help the deep-seated bacteria within the abscess capsule/lining. This is repeated once or twice a day for several days until the pocket stops discharging pus. Alternatively, sterile gauze soaked in dilute iodine can be packed in the pocket. This can be changed every 2-3 days until discharging of pus stops.
- **Antibiotics** – administration of antibiotics and anti inflammatories is key to help in the healing process. This is done based on culture and sensitivity (laboratory) results.



Things to consider when dealing with abscesses

- Aspiration using a sterile needle is key to abscess diagnosis.
- Avoid leaving abscesses to self-lance since this may happen at a point that may not facilitate proper drainage.
- Always thoroughly and immediately, clean abscesses that have ruptured on their own to avoid fly strike.
- Avoid using high concentration (undiluted) of hydrogen peroxide that can cause severe tissue irritation and damage.
- Always use dilute iodine that is more effective than the concentrated one. Dilution makes the iodine available for utilization.
- Avoid using sharp objects when cleaning the pocket as this can tear the abscess capsule and spread infection to deeper tissues.
- Abscesses heal from inside out and therefore the need for thorough cleaning on daily basis.
- Avoid antibiotics before lancing an abscess. This makes it impossible for the abscess to "mature" (it becomes cheesy/caseous).



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PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF ABSCESSES IN LIVESTOCK



MANAGING ABSCESES IN FARM ANIMALS TO ENHANCE FASTER HEALING



Introduction

An abscess is a swollen and infected pus-filled pocket of infection that occurs because of contamination by pus producing bacteria that can be found in various locations of the body of an animal. The pockets are walled-off by a thick fibrous tissue (capsule) and contain pus that may be white, yellow or greenish depending on the bacteria involved.

Causes of abscesses

Often, abscesses result from injuries caused by objects such as:

- Contaminated needles during drug administration
- Contaminated injurious objects like wires, thorns and nails.
- Fighting wounds.

Location of abscesses in animals Abscesses can be found in any part of the body but in ruminants, they are commonly found in

- Skin and muscles around the neck
- Mandibular region close to the ears

- Rump and thigh muscles
- Abdominal wall and flank region
- Hoof sole and coronet
- Udder and scrotum
- Visceral (internal) organs such as liver and lungs
- Dew lap.



Effect of abscesses

They cause:

- pain and suffering of the animal
- tissue damage
- septicaemia and death

Clinical presentation

Often, an abscess may not appear immediately after injury but the following are noticeable:

- Small firm spheres that gradually increase in size
- Affected area becomes warm and painful to touch
- Careful aspiration by an expert reveals pus as the content in the swelling
- At later stages, the swelling becomes fluctuant (soft).
- Skin over the swelling becomes soft and loses a bit of hair.
- Depending on the size and location, the animal appears dull and may develop fever.
- Some spread to other locations within the body.
- Some rupture on their own discharging foul smelling pus.

Management of abscesses

If left undisturbed, abscesses undergo maturation ("ripen") on their own but some might take longer. Therefore requiring:

- **Shaving** - the area around the swelling should be shaved to enhance the effect of fomentation and minimize further contamination after lancing (opening).
- **Hot fomentation** - Applying a cloth/towel soaked in warm water that may be mixed with Epsom salt once or twice a day until the abscess is ready for lancing. This increases blood supply into the area thus hastening maturation ("ripening").

