

# Caseous Lymphadenitis (CL)

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**Disease:** Caseous lymphadenitis is a chronic, contagious bacterial infection characterized by abscesses near the lymph nodes, usually on the neck or near the udder. Commonly found in goats and sheep, and sporadically in horses, cattle, camelids, swine, fowl, and even people. Two forms of the disease include the external (skin) form and the internal (organ) form.

**Prevalence:** In North America, CL only infects about 8% of the goat population. That rate increases to around 22% in older goats. Once one animal in a herd is infected, it is likely to spread to the majority of the herd.

**Transmission:** CL is most commonly transmitted from one infected animal to another through breaches in the skin. Contaminated milking machines, shearing and grooming equipment, and flies are all pathways for transferring the disease. Occasionally, it can cross mucous membranes from inhaling the bacteria. The bacteria can live for months to years in the soil, even in dry climates.

**Symptoms:** With the external form, enlarged lymph nodes grow one to two inches in diameter. The node may rupture, releasing a very contagious greenish-white pus. The internal form involves the enlargement of lymph nodes deep within the body that may impinge upon the surrounding organs. The most common sign of internal infection is weight loss, or slow to minimal weight gain in younger animals.

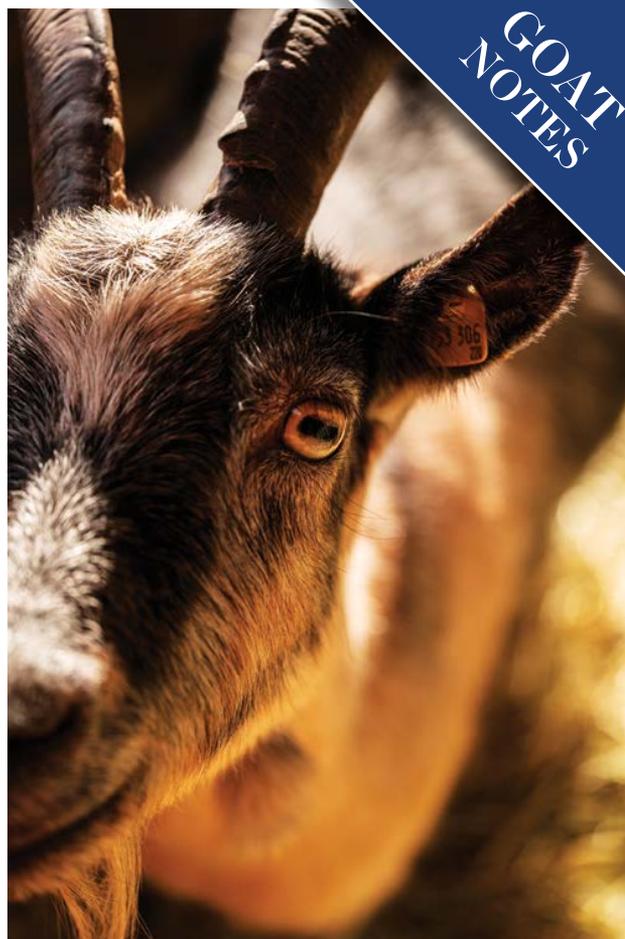
**Treatment:** CL is not considered a curable disease and culling of infected animals from the herd is recommended. However, if an animal has a strong economic or emotional value, several treatment options can prolong life and provide comfort while minimizing transmission to other animals. One common treatment involves lancing and draining the abscesses, flushing with an antiseptic solution, and packing the cavity with gauze. Surgical removal of infected lymph nodes and, more recently, the injection of antibiotics into the nodes are other options. Sanitize all materials that come into contact with the infected animal, to avoid spreading the disease.

**Prevention:** The best way to prevent CL in a disease-free herd is to keep the herd that way. Carefully screen any new animals before you buy, looking for enlarged lymph nodes and insisting on negative blood test results.

## Once CL is found in your herd, you can take steps to keep it from spreading:

- Keep infected animals separate from the rest of the herd.
- Disinfect all equipment and materials that come in contact with the infected animal.
- Practice aggressive fly control.
- Vaccinate healthy and infected animals to minimize the spread of the disease. Vaccinations will not eliminate the disease completely and are not generally recommended for healthy herds with no infected animals.
- You can screen for CL by conducting a blood test. Vaccinated animals will test positive on a blood test since they will have developed the antibodies needed to fight the disease.

While CL is not curable, it's imperative that, once found, you take steps to minimize the spread of disease. Annual CAE testing, as well as avoiding contact with infected animals, are the best ways to keep the disease out of your beloved herd.



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