Lameness in Sheep: Frequency, Risk Factors, and Effect of Season and Management Type

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Sheep farming is one of the main animal husbandry activities of rural and semi-rural communities in Shiraz. Extensive areas of the region are under intense sheep farming in the transitional system. Locomotor soundness is vital for effective grazing, animal production and reproductive efficiency in the livestock. The importance of the lameness in these animals is not yet clearly defined. The objective of this study was to determine the prevalence of lameness as a function of season and husbandry type among sheep in Shiraz and also to describe contributing agents in this regards as well. This study was carried on 9934 sheep including 28 flocks in semi-migratory and 18 flock in systems. Sheep were visited during summer and winter and locomotion scores were assigned to all adult yearlings. The clinical findings were recorded in a self-administered questionnaire. The rate of lameness was 15.05% during the winter and 9.21% during the summer among sheep in system. Also, its prevalence was 11.12% during the winter and 7.18% during the summer among sheep in semi-migratory system; these values were significantly different. The mean prevalence of the lameness due to foot rot and hoof overgrowth in winter were significantly higher than the rate of those in summer. But the rate of interdigital pouch abscess in summer was significantly higher than its rate in winter. The results suggested that the prevalence of lameness is high among sheep in Shiraz and that lameness prevalence could be influenced by season and husbandry type. Lameness should be taken in to account for the most important welfare issues affecting the sheep production.

Key words: Lameness, Sheep