

Caseous Lymphadenitis (CLA)

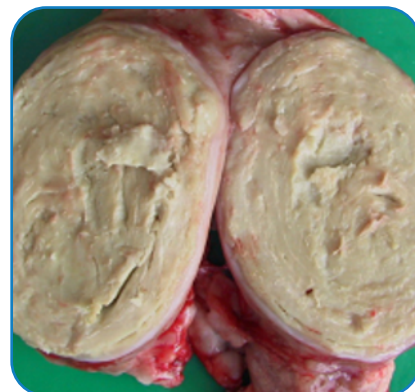
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CLA was first discovered in the UK during 1987 following the importation of infected goats from Germany. Despite the disease being present within the UK, the first Scottish case was not recorded until 1996 when it was discovered in the Borders.

CLA is a chronic disease caused by the bacterium “*Corynebacterium pseudotuberculosis*”, which can also infect humans (zoonotic). This disease is typically characterised by formation of abscesses within the lymph nodes and/or internal organs of infected sheep - the majority of which appear in good health.



Lymph nodes around the head and neck are often affected and may rupture and leak pus. In some cases CLA may be difficult to diagnose as it is estimated that around 25% of affected animals only develop internal lesions e.g. in internal lymph nodes or the lungs. Chronic wasting may be the first sign in animals suffering from internal lesions.

CLA can also increase the levels of both acute and chronic mastitis found within a flock as a result of spread from infected mammary lymph nodes. This can result in reduced performance and milk yield of ewes, which subsequently shortens their productive lifespan.



Sheep typically contract CLA when *Corynebacterium pseudotuberculosis* bacteria enter through skin abrasions that may be invisible to the eye. The bacteria colonise the local lymph nodes and form abscesses.

There are several methods by which CLA can be transmitted. The abscesses may rupture and release bacteria filled pus, which can subsequently infect other animals which come into contact with it. Less commonly, animals suffering from internal CLA lung lesions are believed to be capable of airborne transmission.

It is also possible for the disease to be spread through equipment such as tagging pliers or shearing gear which can act as a method of transmission if not cleaned properly and disinfected before/after use. CLA bacteria have the ability to survive within the environment in faeces, forage and bedding with survival times of approximately 55 days.

At present, there is no licensed, commercially available vaccine for CLA within the UK. However, in extreme cases, the Veterinary Medicines Directorate may grant a licence allowing emergency importation of CLA vaccines from abroad. It should be noted that this vaccine does not have the ability to prevent all new infections or cure infected individuals.

Flocks and individual animals can be tested to establish whether CLA is present. This can be done by taking swabs/samples from lymph node abscesses for bacteriology. Animals displaying signs such as mastitis or wasting can be blood sampled to look for antibodies to CLA. A post-mortem examination is usually required to detected internal lesions. The blood test may also be used to help identify infected animals prior to them displaying distinctive clinical signs of infection. This allows infected ewes to be separated from the rest of the flock and culled.

