AASRP GUIDELINES

TRANSPORTATION OF SHEEP AND GOATS

Animal health personnel have an obligation to ensure adequate welfare, provide humane handling, and maintain disease traceability when transporting sheep and goats.[1] Depending on the mode of transportation, origin location, and destination of the animals, official animal identification and transport documents may be required. This guideline serves as a resource to veterinarians who provide advice and consultation on transportation of sheep and goats to locations such as exhibitions, fairs, slaughter facilities, and between farms and ranches.

An important challenge in transporting sheep and goats is the wide range of transport methods. Small ruminants may be appropriately transported in personal vehicles, livestock trailers of various sizes, and even modified shipping containers, as long as animals are determined fit for transport and the conditions of handling and transport are adequate. Whether transporting one individual animal or several hundred, veterinarians are obligated to meet individual animal needs in transit. In addition, vehicles should have covered roof and sides for protection during transport, and flooring should be a solid non-slip surface.[2]

General information about individual animal needs, weather considerations, stocking density, and transport conditions are provided below, along with recommendations about stopping during transport.

Individual Animal Considerations
Small ruminants should not be transported if they exhibit any of the signs or conditions listed below.[3]

- Body temperature >103.3° F (39.6°C)
- Active lambing/kidding
- Non-ambulatory
- Significant open or draining lesions or wounds
- Fractures or lameness (lameness score 3,4,5)[4]
- Presence of uterine prolapse
- Sickness/contagious disease
- Severe diarrhea

Proper identification is required for transport, and detailed information on acceptable forms of identification can be found in the USDA APHIS NVAP Reference Guide for Sheep/Goat Identification. Proper identification allows for animal disease traceability and is required for the Interstate Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (ICVI) to be completed for many animal classes. Information on the need for an ICVI or other requirements for the transport of small ruminants can be found at Interstate Livestock, a site hosted by the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA).

During transport, it is important to be aware of the signs of heat stress or hypothermia and act accordingly. Lambs and kids are at high risk of hypothermia and should be carefully monitored.

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Concern	Clinical Signs
Heat stress5	Open mouth breathing Increase respiratory rate Elevated rectal temperature Recumbency and inability to rise
Hypothermia6	Hunched posture Hollow flanked Lowered head Shivering

Weather considerations

Heat and humidity: All animals are susceptible to heat stress, and shorn animals are susceptible to sunburn. During hot weather, transport should be scheduled early in the day. Ensure adequate shade and ventilation to manage high temperatures and humidity.[7] Transportation should not occur if the temperature exceeds 100°F and humidity ≥45% or if the temperature exceeds 90°F and humidity ≥70% because of the Temperature Humidity Index (THI).[8] If transporting in high heat or humidity, prevent overcrowding and reduce the loading density by at least 15%.[9]

Cold: Avoid transporting animals at temperatures below 26°F. Feeding before transport helps animals maintain body heat during cold weather and minimize cold stress.[10] Frostbite may be prevented by keeping the animals dry, increasing bedding, and preventing overcrowding.[11]

Ventilation: Ventilation should be altered based on outside temperature. During transportation in warm conditions, maximum ventilation should be used to prevent overheating. In cold conditions, optimize ventilation to retain warmth and protect from cold stress.[11]

Recommended Stocking Density for Lambs and Sheep[9*]

Loading density should be reduced to 85% of maximum in hot humid weather and for trips longer than 24 hours.

Slaughter Weight Lambs and Sheep English / Metric Units	Shorn English / Metric Units	Full Fleece English / Metric Units
60 lbs. (27 kg)	2.13 sq.ft. (0.20 sq.m.)	2.24 sq.ft. (0.21 sq.m.)
80 lbs. (36 kg)	2.50 sq.ft. (0.23 sq.m.)	2.60 sq.ft. (0.24 sq.m.)
100 lbs. (45 kg)	2.80 sq.ft. (0.26 sq.m.)	2.95 sq.ft. (0.27 sq.m.)
120 lbs. (54 kg)	3.20 sq.ft. (0.30 sq.m.)	3.36 sq.ft. (0.31 sq.m.)

*See the cited document for more detailed guidance

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Stopping Protocols

The frequency and duration of stops should be limited to reduce thermal stress, in both high and low temperatures. If stops are necessary, they should be kept brief and infrequent to minimize the impact on animal well-being.[4] If livestock are being transported for longer than 28 consecutive hours, they must be offloaded for at least 5 consecutive hours for feed, water, and rest.[12]

Summary

When transporting sheep and goats, it is imperative to minimize stress, address animal welfare, and provide a safe environment. Veterinarians can utilize this document as a reference for the requirements for transport and humane handling of small ruminants to various locations such as fairs, slaughter facilities, and the stockyard.

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Approved 02-23-2026

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