Before exhibitors load their lambs or kids for a trip to the county show, they should make sure that their animals are healthy and physically sound. A sick animal could easily infect other animals at the show. Skin infections are some of the more common illnesses that sheep and goats get and spread. These infections are usually contagious to other animals and sometimes to humans. Exhibitors should take a few minutes to examine their animals for any skin abnormalities. Clues that indicate a problem might include hair or wool loss, bumps, blisters, areas of redness, moist or crusty areas, and scabs. The following are some examples of common skin diseases that infect small ruminants.

**Dermatophytosis** (Club Lamb Fungus, Ringworm) is a common skin disease of sheep and goats and is contagious to humans. Contrary to its name, ringworm, the disease is not caused by a worm but by a fungus. It is easy to identify in shorn sheep. The lesions are circular and crusty. They normally appear on the face, ears, and neck. In unshorn sheep with this condition, the wool appears clumped. Infected wool fibers easily break and fall out of the center of the lesions. Animals with these lesions are mildly pruritic (itch) and may be seen rubbing. Any animals with lesions that appear moist or crusty and/or flaky, should not be allowed to mingle with other animals and should not be taken to the county fair.

The condition is mainly seen in young sheep and especially show lambs. Show lambs are more susceptible to ringworm due to the stress and preparation they go through getting ready to show. The frequency of hauling, showing, and changing of diets stress lambs which can lower immunity. Frequent washing and clipping of sheep break down the lanolin which serves as a natural barrier to infectious organisms making the skin more susceptible to infections. The fungus is easily transmitted through shearing equipment, grooming tools, tack, and blankets. The organism can also contaminate barns, bedding, feeders, and trailers. Ringworm lesions usually take one to 4 weeks to develop after exposure to the fungus.

**Contagious Ecthyma** (Sore Mouth, Orf) is caused by a parapox virus. The disease is mainly seen in lambs and kids. Most lesions occur around the mouth and face but may be seen on teats, feet, and genitalia. In early stages of the disease, blisters can be found; however, the blisters rupture quickly and scab over. Once blisters rupture the sores appear raised and crusty (wart like). Lambs or kids with the disease should be isolated. Sore mouth is also contagious to humans and is a reportable disease.

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Caseous Lymphadenitis is caused by Corynebacterium pseudotuberculosis. This bacteria survives in the environment for a long time and is spread by animals that have open lesions. It can be found on water troughs, feeders, fence post, gates, etc. This bacteria is introduced into animals either by penetrating the skin from an injury or by penetrating the mucus membranes when it is ingested or inhaled. The bacteria causes abscesses in the skin or lymph nodes. The contents of the lesions appear thick and greenish-creamy in color. The disease is primarily in sheep and goats, but is contagious to other animals and humans.

External Parasites may cause lesions to the skin. Some of the common parasites are lice, sheep keds, ticks, and rarely mange mites. Lice would be most common in the winter. Typical signs include pruritus, wool or hair loss, and weight loss.

Dermatophilosis (Streptothricosis, Lumpy Wool Disease, Rain Scald) is a bacterial skin disease caused by Dermatophilus congolensis. The disease is associated with high humidity and long periods of rainfall. The disease occurs in all ages of animals but is more prevalent in lambs and kids. Lesions from this disease are typically found on the top of the neck and back. They appear as clumps of hair (paintbrush like) which progress to scabs. In wool sheep the infection appears as pyramid like masses of scab material. If the scabs are removed, an area of pus may be found. Some of the animals may be pruritic (itch). The bacteria may be spread by shearing, by contaminated blankets or tack, or by external parasites (ticks and flies). Animals that are sick or have large numbers of internal parasites are more susceptible to the disease. Sheep and goats that have the disease are contagious and should be isolated. The bacteria is contagious to humans.

Staphylococcal Dermatitis is a bacterial skin disease. The organism causing the problem is Staphylococcus aureus. Animals with this condition will have moist red skin around the eyes, ears, and bridge of nose. These animals are contagious and should not be allowed to mingle with other sheep or goats.

All exhibitors should make sure that their animals are healthy before making a trip to the livestock show. This should greatly reduce the chance of a disease outbreak at the shows and reduce chance of bringing a disease home.

Good luck to all the exhibitors.