



# SHEEP SCAB

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### 1. What is sheep scab?

Sheep scab (also known as brandsiekte) is a disease that is caused when sheep are infested with *Psoroptes ovis* mites. The mites feed on the skin of the sheep and cause itching, scratching, crusty lesions and wool loss.

### 2. Why is it important?

Sheep infested with sheep scab mites suffer from intense itching and spend their time scratching when they should be eating and breeding. This causes sheep to lose condition, lose wool and the farmer to lose money. Severe infestations can even result in death of sheep. Sheep scab spreads easily between flocks and costs money to treat, so it is important to prevent outbreaks.



### 3. How do sheep get sheep scab?

Mites can spread between sheep when sheep are together in a flock or when sharing grazing, vehicles or being in the same buildings as other sheep. Mites can also fall off the sheep and be transported to new flocks by people, on equipment or in vehicles.



### 4. How can I prevent sheep scab?

Inspect any sheep for signs of sheep scab before buying them. Some sheep can carry sheep scab mites without showing any signs, so isolate, dip or treat all the new sheep twice 7-10 days apart before mixing them with the rest of the flock. Be careful about sharing equipment, vehicles and staff with other sheep farms. Provide clean clothes for workers to use and disinfect any equipment coming from other sheep farms.



### 5. What should I do if I see signs of sheep scab?

Any condition that causes itching, scabbing and/or wool loss in sheep is notifiable by law. Notify your local state vet office immediately and an official will come to inspect the flock and take samples to determine what is causing the problem.

### 6. What will happen if sheep scab is diagnosed on my farm?

The state vet will be informed and quarantine the farm until all the sheep have been treated twice 7-10 days apart with an effective dip or injectable product. After treatment the flock will be inspected to make sure there are no more signs of active infestation and then quarantine will be lifted.



**7. Can I treat the sheep myself if I think they have sheep scab?**

You are required by law to report any itching or wool loss in sheep to your state veterinarian. They will help you to diagnose and treat the problem the correct way and as quickly as possible. Some farmers try to treat sheep scab themselves using the incorrect methods or products and end up only making the problem worse over time.

**8. Which animals can get sheep scab?**

Sheep scab mites feed on sheep only. Other animals can carry the mites, but are not bitten by them. For instance goats that live together with a flock of sheep with sheep scab will not show any clinical signs of the disease, but should be dipped to kill any mites that they could be carrying. Sheep scab does not infest humans or any other species of domestic pets or livestock.

**CONTACTS:**

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State Veterinarian: George	044-803-3771/0	SVGeorge@ westerncape.gov.za	4 Varing Avenue, George
State Veterinarian: Boland	021-808-5028/ 5253	SVBoland@ westerncape.gov.za	Western Cape Department of Agriculture building, Muldersvlei road, Elsenburg
State Veterinarian: Swellendam	021-808-5059/ 028-425-4850	DOA.svswellendam@ westerncape.gov.za	67 Voortrekker St, Swellendam
State Veterinarian: Beaufort West	023-414-9220/1	DOA.svbeaufortwest@ westerncape.gov.za	Blyth St, Beaufort West
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