



Sore Mouth (Orf Virus)

What is sore mouth infection?

Sore mouth (also known as “scabby mouth”, contagious ecthyma, or orf) is caused by a germ (virus) passed to people from sheep and goats. This disease can cause sores on people’s hands, but not sores around the mouth like it does in animals. It cannot spread from person to person.

How is it transmitted?

People who come in direct contact with an infected animal or surfaces that the animal has touched with its sores may become infected.

Which animals can get sore mouth?

Sore mouth is usually only found in sheep and goats.

Who is the most at risk for developing sore mouth?

People who come in contact with sheep and goats are at the greatest risk for sore mouth infection. Some specific activities that may put you at risk include:

- Petting or having casual contact with infected animals
- Bottle feeding, tube feeding, or shearing animals
- Handling infected equipment
- Working with animals when you have an open cut or skin sore
- Being bitten by an infected animals

What are the symptoms?

People who have sore mouth infection most often experience painful sores on their hands. The sores will usually last for 2 months and can heal on their own.

What is the treatment?

There are no treatments available that are specific to the sore mouth infection. However, if the sores caused by sore mouth become infected with other germs (bacteria), antibiotics may be required.

How will I know if an animal is infected?

Some sheep and goats may not have any symptoms. In these cases, it will be difficult to know whether the animal is infected. If an animal is showing symptoms, it will have sores (blisters and scabs) around its nose, lips, and muzzle. Additional sores may be visible around an animal’s legs and utters.

How can I prevent sore mouth infection?

The best way to protect yourself from getting sore mouth infection is to wear rubber or latex gloves when you are handling sheep and goats, especially if you have any open cuts on your hands. Also, remember to always wash your hands after interacting with any animal.

