

Contagious Ecthyma (Orf)

Occupational Viral Infection from Handling Small Ruminants

What is Contagious Ecthyma?

Contagious Ecthyma, often called Orf or Sore Mouth Infection, is a viral disease that causes lesions on the mouths of sheep, goats, and other small ruminants. It is found worldwide and can spread to humans.

How does infection occur?

Infection can spread to humans via direct contact with an infected animal.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may appear up to 3 to 7 days after contact with an infected animal. In the early stages of the disease, one or more small ulcerative or nodular skin lesions typically form, usually on the hands (common point of contact). Lesion(s) slowly grow in size and a fever may occur. The lesions usually clear in 3 to 6 weeks, but in some cases may result in another infection.

How do I prevent it?

Make sure to wash hands after handling animals. Wear gloves if working with a sick animal or a known carrier as well as when giving the orf vaccine.

How is it treated?

Antiseptics and wound dressings for the lesions. If a secondary infection occurs antibiotics can help treat it.

Resources used:

- Chapter 28, Selected Zoonoses, (2015) *Lab Animal Medicine*, 3rd ed.
- The Center for Food Security and Public Health Zoonotic Disease Factsheets: Contagious Ecthyma
- The Center for Food Security and Public Health Zoonotic Transmission Routes: Contagious Ecthyma