

# White Muscle Disease

Famo Flier

White muscle disease (WMD), sometimes called nutritional myopathy or nutritional muscular dystrophy, is typically associated with a selenium and/or vitamin E deficiency. WMD appears more frequently in regions with selenium deficient soil. WMD can affect both youngstock and mature animals. Newborns may be stillborn or too weak to nurse due to selenium deficiency. WMD can affect cattle, goats, and sheep.

There are two forms of WMD:

1. Congenital which affects the heart muscle
2. Delayed form that can affect cardiac or skeletal muscle

Signs and symptoms

1. Stiffness, weakness, and trembling
2. Back legs becoming stiff and unusable
3. Coughing or choking with milk possibly running out of nose (muscles needed to swallow being affected)
4. Stiffness developing after exercise
5. Death (especially if cardiac muscle affected)
  - a. If cardiac muscle is affected death may occur within 2-3 days of birth
6. In adult animals – chronic infections, mastitis, retained placenta, reproductive disorders, abortions, poor conception rates

Treatment usually involves injections of selenium and vitamin E. If WMD is an annual problem, consider selenium injections for all preparturient dams (1 – 4 weeks before due date). Consult your veterinarian for more information.

Prevention is always preferred. Make sure to provide a quality vitamin/mineral supplement to your animals all year round and especially in the weeks leading up to parturition. Also, keep in mind that selenium is a regulated substance in the US and inclusion in feed is controlled by law. Please contact your Famo Feeds dealer or representative if you have any questions concerning your feeding program.