**Contraindications in Surgery**

Sheep and goats are the most commonly presented small ruminants. Unfortunately, these animals do not always make the best candidates for either surgery or particularly anaesthesia. Because of their unusual anatomy and physiology, general anaesthesia and even heavy sedation can be complicated and life threatening.

* Not only are the anaesthetic drugs sometimes an issue, but complications associated with the stomach and digestive systems of small ruminants need to be considered as well.
* Sheep and goats are adept at masking illness, as are many of the prey animals, and can be sick without showing clinical signs. Therefore, a good physical exam is of utmost importance.
* The doses of most of the anaesthetic drugs are also very different from other species.
* The four-stomach configuration of small ruminants and the fermentation action that makes up the digestive process can be compromised when these animals are placed in either lateral or dorsal recumbency.
* Because sheep and goats re-masticate and re-chew their food along with the fermentation, the rumen is usually very full. When the patient is put into either lateral or dorsal recumbency, regurgitation of rumen contents can occur. This regurgitation can then lead to aspiration.
* Increased salivation when the patient is under anaesthesia can also cause aspiration. Eructation is impeded, and gas accumulates causing bloating.
* Bloating can be severe if there is a large amount of ingesta in the stomach and/or if the anaesthetic event is extended. Rumen distention can impede diaphragm function, leading to abnormalities in breathing and oxygenation.
* Anaesthesia depresses the swallowing reflex, which increases the risk of aspirating stomach contents into the lungs. Active regurgitation can occur at light levels of anaesthesia, especially when the larynx is stimulated by intubation.

