

## **Spiritual Anointing Prevents Flies, Scab and Head Butting by Jack E. Albright**

You anoint my head with oil. Psalms 23: 5b

Surprise! Sheep ranchers and pastors have more in common than the average person imagines. Shepherds treat sheep for nasal flies, scab and head butting. Pastors try to prevent church members from becoming infected and disabled with the spiritual equivalent of flies, scab and head butting.

Nasal flies swarm at certain times of the year and buzz around the sheep's head, attempting to deposit their eggs on the damp mucous membranes of the sheep's nose. If they are successful, the eggs will hatch in a few days to form small, slender, worm-like larvae. They work their way up the nasal passage into the sheep's head; they burrow into the flesh and there set up an intense irritation accompanied by severe inflammation.

To gain relief from this agonizing annoyance sheep will deliberately beat their heads against trees, rocks, posts or bushes.

Some sheep have actually killed themselves for relief. Shepherds applied a mixture of linseed oil, sulfur and tar to the sheep's nose and head at the first sighting of flies.

Scab is an irritating and highly contagious disease common among sheep around the world. Scab, caused by a minute microscopic parasite that proliferates in warm weather, spread throughout a flock by direct contact between infected and non-infected animals. Sheep often rub their heads together in an affectionate and friendly manner, thus spreading the disease. Palestinian shepherds used olive oil, sulfur and spices to prevent and treat infection.

Head butting is another interesting ritual among sheep. Autumn is the season of rut, or mating, and great battles between the rams for possession of the ewes take place. It isn't unusual for several rams to become badly bruised, injured, or killed. To lessen the damage one modern shepherd rubbed large quantities of axle grease on their horns and noses. When they fought they would more easily glance off of each other. In that way much of their heat and tension would dissipate with less damage being done.

During my thirty-year ministry as pastor of churches I have seen a shocking similarity between sheep and church members. Without warning, a church member may act as if they had been attacked by a swarm of nose flies. They began shaking their heads in opposition to many of the things the church was trying to accomplish. They gave a new interpretation to "flies in the ointment" of human compassion, love and mercy. It is often the small, petty gnat-like annoyances that become burning issues that can ruin relationships, and even our spiritual witness. Some of the first symptoms of spiritual parasites among church members are agitation, bitterness, complaining, faultfinding, gossiping, criticizing, and an unwillingness to reconcile differences. Our behavior as a child of God, unless controlled, can degenerate to a most disgraceful sort of frustrated tirade.

I found that much of the grief, wounds, hurts, ill will, and lack of forgiveness in people's lives could usually be traced back to old rivalries, jealousies and battles that had broken out between fellow Christians. Head butting between power brokers has left behind many seriously wounded persons. Only God knows how many wounded souls never enter a church simply because they butted heads over a frivolous issue.

In Luke 11: 13 Christ urges us to ask the Father to anoint us daily with the Holy Spirit. Only the anointing of the Holy Spirit can cleanse us from the spiritual parasites that would rob us of joy, contentment, love, patience, gentleness and peace.

Morning and evening spiritual anointing will prevent spiritual flies, scab and head butting.