

## Ovine cephalopagus foetal monster

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### ABSTRACT

A rare case of cephalopagus condition in an ovine fetus is being reported here.

**Key words :** Ovine, cephalopagus, fetus

Conjoined or fused symmetrical twins are usually monozygotic and represent incomplete division of one embryo into two components. This usually happens during the primitive streak stage of embryonic development (Noden and Lahunta, 1985). Duplication of body parts can occur at both cranial and caudal ends with the middle area of the foetal monster remaining single. Duplication of the cranial part of the fetus is more common than that of the caudal portion (Roberts, 1971). These conditions are most common in cattle but are seen rarely in sheep, pigs dogs, cats and are exceedingly rare in horses.



Fig. 1. Cephalopagus foetal monster

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**Case History :** A pregnant ewe was presented with a history of dystocia that was relieved following lubrication of birth canal associated with digital manipulations and traction.

On careful examination of the fetus revealed a monster characterized by conjoined twins of normal size with a single head, three ears, two necks fused at the occipital region however the legs, abdomen and other body parts were in duplicate (Fig. 1). Such a condition is described as "Cephalopagus"

**Discussion :** The blastocyst contains a portion of embryonic disc, which divides into two parts immediately before gastrulation. During this stage of embryonic development, there will be some sharing of extra embryonic members between the two fetuses. Following the gastrulation in the early stages of embryonic development the primitive streak will be formed. During this stage if the twins are monozygotic, then the division is known as diplopagus (Siamese twins). In the event of asymmetrical division of primitive streak the conjoined twins may develop into cephalopagus, thoracopagus, abdominopagus or pygopagus (Noden and Lahunta, 1985). The anatomical characters of this ovine monster revealed cephalopagus condition.

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