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Q my neighbor wants to get some sheep



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All

Forums

Short videos

Videos

Images

◆ AI Overview

Having sheep nearby could potentially worsen your asthma, but this is not guaranteed. Asthma triggers can come directly from the animals or from allergens present in their living environment, such as hay and mold. ☺

Potential sheep-related asthma triggers

- **Lanolin:** While a true allergy to wool is rare, some people are allergic to lanolin, the waxy substance on sheep's wool. Exposure can cause respiratory symptoms like wheezing, coughing, and irritated eyes.
- **Dander:** Like other furry animals, sheep can produce dander, which consists of tiny flakes of skin that can become airborne. Inhaling dander can trigger an allergic asthma reaction in sensitive individuals.
- **Hay and dust:** The fodder used for sheep, such as hay, can release dust, mold, and pollen that act as powerful respiratory irritants. The movement of animals and strong winds can carry these particles into your home.

- **Ammonia:** Animal waste contains urea, which can break down and release ammonia into the air. In enclosed spaces like barns, this can become a respiratory irritant. While this is a greater risk for those working directly with the animals, it's a potential factor to consider. ☀

Factors that influence the risk

The likelihood and severity of an effect on your asthma depend on several factors:

- **Proximity:** The closer you are to the animals and their barn, the higher your risk of exposure to airborne allergens and irritants.
- **Number of animals:** A large flock can generate more allergens, dust, and waste than a few sheep.
- **Weather and wind direction:** Airborne irritants can be carried by the wind. For example, if the prevailing winds blow from your neighbor's yard toward your house, your exposure may be higher.
- **Individual sensitivity:** People with allergic asthma are more susceptible to triggers from animals. You may also be allergic to other substances in the sheep's environment, such as specific types of pollen. ☀

What you can do

- **Talk to your doctor:** Before the sheep arrive, discuss your concerns with your doctor. They can help you determine