

Training a Herd of 0.3 Aoudad Sheep for Voluntary Injections

By Stephen Belknap and Kelley Newman

At the Ark Encounter's Ararat Ridge Zoo, we trained 0.3 Aoudad sheep (*Ammotragus lervia*) from our herd to perform voluntary husbandry behaviors. Before training, they avoided all interaction with keepers. They now have all successfully performed voluntary injections for their annual vaccination. This process took several steps. We trained each aoudad to station and desensitized them to being touched in the stations. Then we desensitized them to poking with a metal conduit, mimicking a jabstick. Finally, we desensitized them to being poked by a toothpick mounted in the end of the conduit. We performed all necessary injections by jabstick and by hand, with no darting required.