

Ashe County Sheep and Goat Newsletter

Ashe County Center

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Contact Us

North Carolina Cooperative
Extension, Ashe County Center
134 Government Circle, Suite 202
Jefferson, NC 28640

Phone: (336) 846-5850
Fax: (336) 846-5882

<http://ashe.ces.ncsu.edu/>

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Getting Ready for Kids & Lambs

Gestating Doe and Ewe Nutrition

Does/Ewes that are in the last month of gestation need about four pounds of good quality hay and one pound of corn each day. Highest quality hay should not be fed during gestation. This is a time to utilize your average to good quality hay. If hay is limited, one pound of corn can be substituted for two pounds of hay. Always provide fresh, clean drinking water every day. Feeding hay and grain on the ground encourages feed waste and can spread disease. Always provide a complete mineral mix, free choice to the does/ewes. This should be specific to goats or sheep and fortified with selenium.

Vaccinate does/ewes for overeating disease and tetanus. These vaccines will provide passive immunity to the kid/lamb. Once the kid/lamb is 4-6 weeks old, vaccinate the kid/lamb for overeating disease and tetanus.

Parturition

Stage 1 - Cervix dilates and contractions begin. This stage lasts 3-4 hours, but may take up to 12 hours.

Stage 2 - Fetus has moved into the birth canal and doe/ewe begins pushing. This stage lasts approximately 2 hours and ends with the kid(s)/lamb(s) being born. If stage 2 lasts longer, intervention may be needed.

Stage 3 - Placenta is expelled and uterine involution commences. This stage lasts 2-3 hours.

Kidding and Lambing

Pregnant does/ewes should be checked every 3-4 hours during the day. Does/Ewes checked around 11:00 p.m. will not need to be checked again until 5:00 a.m. Those does/ewes that will kid/lamb during the night will show signs of kidding/lambing during the late night check. Does/Ewes close to kidding/lambing will be restless and separate themselves from the others. They will often create a nest to deliver their kids/lambs. The does/ewes should be allowed to kid/lamb where they feel comfortable and then she and the kids/lambs moved to a pen where they can bond. The kidding/lambing area should be dry and draft free for the newborn kids/lambs.

After the does/ewes begin to strain and the water bags have passed, delivery should take about 45-60 minutes. The kids/lambs should be born within 30-45 minutes after the front legs are seen. Any kids/lambs born after the first kid/lamb should be delivered within 30 minutes. Deliveries taking longer than this may indicate kidding/lambing difficulties.

The doe/ewe will produce colostrum for up to 18 hours after birth. Colostrum contains antibodies that are necessary for the health and protection of the newborn kid/lamb. The kid/lamb should receive adequate colostrum within 30-60 minutes after birth.

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Normal and Abnormal Presentations During Parturition

Normal lambing and kidding in sheep and goats should be completed within 2 hours after the water sac appears. The most common types of presentations are anterior and posterior. In an anterior presentation, the front feet, with the head resting between them, appear first. When the head has exited the vulva, expulsion of the lamb or kid quickly follows. The appearance of the hind feet first is called posterior presentation, which may be a little slower than the anterior type and not as easy to deliver. The lamb or kid may also be twisted or turned in many different ways. Following are the common presentations and directions for assisting with each. Remember, when in doubt, call your veterinarian for assistance.

Head first with both forelegs, body right side up (Figure 1). This is an anterior presentation that occurs when the front feet appear first with the head resting between them. Rarely is any assistance necessary. However, when a small ewe or doe is delivering a very large lamb or kid, she may encounter difficulty getting the lamb or kid through her narrow vulva. Lubrication and gentle assistance are sometimes required. Pull downward and only during the contractions. The lamb or kid is usually hung by the shoulders, and the contractions that follow will pass the shoulders through the remainder of the birth canal.

Figure 1. Head first with both forelegs, body right side up



Head first with one foreleg, body right side up (Figure 2). In this situation, you must bring the other foreleg forward. Try to elevate the ewe's or doe's posterior. Sometimes if the rump is elevated, the lamb or kid will recede into the abdominal cavity and naturally reposition itself. However, you will probably have to reach in and bring the other leg up beside the foreleg that is in the correct position. Such action will bring the legs farther in front of the head than normal. The head will often turn back when an attempt is made to pull both legs and the head into the birth canal. Be gentle as you work your way in. Use only one or two fingers if possible. A synthetic sterile cord ($\frac{1}{8}$ inch in diameter) may be required but only as a last resort. Make sure you bring up a foreleg and not a hind leg.

Figure 2. Head first with one foreleg, body right side up



Head bent down with forelegs correct, body right side up (Figure 3). This presentation, though abnormal, is neither unusual nor very difficult to correct. Push the lamb or kid back into the uterus. Try to elevate the ewe's or doe's rump so the lamb or kid will recede into the abdominal cavity and give you more room to move your hand in the uterus. Place the head on the forelegs. The contractions that follow will usually force the lamb or kid out as long as it maintains the correct position.

Figure 3. Head bent down with forelegs correct, body right side up



Head thrown back with forelegs correct, body right side up (Figure 4).

This is almost the same presentation as shown in Figure 3. Remedial procedures are the same. Remember that you must move the head far enough back to turn it around.

Figure 4. Head thrown back with forelegs correct, body right side up



Hind feet first, body right side up (Figure 5). This is a posterior presentation

that is slow and laborious but not abnormal. The hind legs are identified by feeling the hock joint and upper leg curvature instead of a straight knee and forearm on the forelegs. When the hind legs are out, you must help. With a very clean rag or towel, grasp both hind legs and pull downward gently with the contractions. Twist the lamb or kid gently from side to side and lubricate it with oil if it becomes too dry. When the rump appears, pull very hard when the ewe or doe pushes. When the lamb or kid starts to move, keep it coming. Be careful to avoid breaking the umbilical cord prematurely.

Figure 5. Hind feet first, body right side up



Hind feet first, body upside down (Figure 6). A large ewe or doe may

deliver a lamb or kid in this position without assistance. This happens sometimes with the second presentation in a triplet birth when the birth canal is already enlarged and lubricated by the birth of the first lamb or kid. If assistance is needed, reach for both hind feet, twist, and gently pull downward when the ewe or doe pushes. Continue with assistance as explained above.

Figure 6. Hind feet first, body upside down



Breech position with rump and tail, no feet visible (Figure 7). A lamb

or kid cannot be delivered in a breech position. However, patience is advised because a little time may bring the appearance of the hind feet into the birth canal. If the hind feet do not appear after a short time, assistance is required.

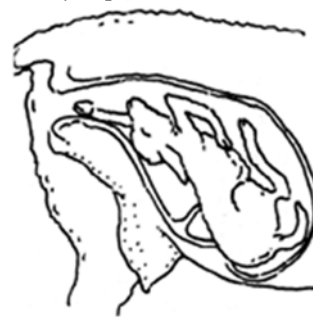
Sometimes this presentation is confusing because the body is completely in the uterus. Or, if the body is in the birth canal, the rump may resemble the head. Feeling for the tail will help you to discern the presentation. Also check the direction the toes are pointing. If the toes point downward, the presentation is breech. If you feel only the tail, the hocks of the lamb or kid may be against the pelvis and no progress can be made. bring the hind legs out one at a time, and be very careful to avoid entanglement with the umbilical cord. Continue as with a hind-feet-first presentation.

Figure 7. breech position with rump and tail, no feet visible



Head first with one foreleg, body upside down (Figure 8). This is much simpler than it looks if you recognize the presentation from examination. Reach over the top of the lamb or kid by pressing its head down. Then gently grasp the hind feet and pull them into the birth canal. The presentation will be changed into a hind-feet-first presentation, as in Figure 5.

Figure 8. Head first with one foreleg, body upside down



Head alone, no feet visible (Figure 9). Lambs and kids cannot be delivered in this position. Early in the lambing or kidding process, if both feet are not under the nose, push the head back into the uterus. If the lamb or kid does not rearrange itself, then reach in the uterus, grab the forelegs, and place them under the lamb's or kid's head. Resist efforts to expel the lamb or kid by the ewe or doe. Reach under the lamb's or kid's neck with one finger and hook a leg to pull it forward under the chin. Repeat this procedure with the second foreleg.

Figure 9. Head alone, no feet visible.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Micah Orfield'.

Micah Orfield
Extension Agent, Agriculture