

PREPARING FOR KIDDING AND LAMBING SEASON

December 2017 Newsletter

Lambing and kidding season is nearly here. Now is a great time to review the best practices for ensuring a healthy and successful season.

Prior to Lambing and Kidding

During the last trimester of pregnancy (6 weeks), a pregnant ewe or doe's caloric requirements increase by 100-200%. In order for animals to meet their late-pregnancy nutritional requirements, a higher quality diet must be offered. For the average animal, this means feeding free choice high quality hay and roughly one pound of commercial feed per head per day for the last six weeks of pregnancy. Links for calculating specific rations for your herd can be found on our website. All feed changes should be made gradually. Mineral requirements also increase during this time and a trace mineral supplement should always be available. Animals that receive inadequate nutrition during this time are susceptible to pregnancy toxemia and hypocalcemia. Unfortunately these preventable diseases are very common and often result in serious illness or death for the dam and her young.

Care should be taken that the doe or ewe be in excellent overall health while pregnant. Foot rot, internal parasites, and lice are all common problems that increase an animal's energy requirements and decrease her ability to meet them. This compounds the risk of pregnancy toxemia and other complications.

Dams should be vaccinated with a CD/T vaccine and possibly dewormed 4 weeks prior to birthing. If vaccinated at the correct time, the colostrum will contain antibodies that will be protective for the young for about the first three months of life. If the dam has never been vaccinated, she will need a second injection 3-4 weeks after the first to properly stimulate her immunity (at 8 and 4 weeks prior to lambing). Only ewes or does that exhibit signs of parasitism should be dewormed at this time. This will target the parasites when the most eggs are being shed in the manure.

At Birth

Occasionally, producers will have to assist their animals during kidding and lambing. If one must assist, a few rules should be kept in mind. First, there are many infectious causes of reproductive problems in sheep and goats that are contagious to people. Pregnant women are most at risk. Children, elderly people and immunocompromised people are the next highest risk category. They should not assist with births if possible. If an animal does need assistance (usually if no progress is made in 30 minutes), remember to be very clean and to carefully discard any fetal fluids or membranes. Always wear gloves and wash hands afterward.

The next rule is to be clean and be gentle. Use warm water and mild soap to wash the dam's vulva. Then use a copious amount of water soluble lubricant to gently extract the fetus. If it seems like there is not enough room for the fetus to come out, there may not be! Some dams are just too small and will require a C section.

The final essential rule is that all newborns require colostrum. Ideally, the newborn will nurse from its mother within 1 hour of birth. If colostrum from the mother is not available, powdered colostrum **REPLACEMENT** should be fed. Colostrum *Supplement* is sold in many stores. It does not contain high enough levels of IgG to protect the newborn and should never be used as the first feeding. At a minimum, newborns should consume 10% of their bodyweight in colostrum over the first 24 hrs of life. If no colostrum has been consumed by 6 hours of age, it is considered an emergency.

Supplies needed for kidding and lambing can be ordered with free shipping at valleybrookvet.com. Feel free to call or email us with any questions about specific issues on your farm. Have a very merry holiday season!

VALLEY BROOK VETERINARY SERVICE

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