

Lambing and Kidding Management

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"Perhaps one of the most important and least stressed management tools available to sheep [goat] producers is observation."

Some basics

Average gestation ~ 150 days

- ∘ 147 155 days
- Begin observations 140 days

Look for signs for parturition

- Off feed
- Isolation
- Restlessness
- Distended udder and teats
- Dilated vulva
- Hollow appearance in front of hips



Keys to success

Nutrition

- Pre-breeding season
- Breeding season
- Gestation

Increase offspring survival!

- Breeding season management
 - Dams and Sire
 - 50% of genetics
 - Health
 - Vaccinations
 - Husbandry
 - Facilities

Prepare Early

Thermometer

Flashlight

Exam gloves

Obstetrical gloves

Obstetrical lube

Iodine solution (7%) + disposable clean cup

Bucket (stainless steel is easy to disinfect)

Electrolytes

Drenching gun +/- 60 cc oral drenching syringes

Nutri-drench (or similar propylene glycol based energy drench) +/- propylene glycol

Heat lamp/hair dryer/warming box Frozen banked colostrum (or colostrum supplement if none saved)

Colostrum replacer (Land O'Lakes)

Bottles, nipples (Pritchard teat), milk replacer

Milk replacer

Esophageal feeding tube + syringe

Gauze

Paper towels

Towels, rags

Lamb puller





Prepare facilities

Indoor

- Clean, dry, well-ventilated
- Jugs
 - 4 x 4
 - 12 24 hr

Outdoor

- Watch the weather
- Check fencing: Predator control
- Look for *booby traps*!
- Well-drained soils
- Pastures with natural shelter
- Easy observation
- Inclement weather plan





Sheep

Shear if necessary

Full shorn or crutch

- Crutch removing wool around vulva and udder before lambing
- Keep rear clean
- Lambs have an easier time nursing
- Encourages ewes to seek shelter from cold



Stages of parturition



Stage 1

- Uterine contractions and dilation of the cervix
- May last several hours (12 24 hr)
- Dams may isolate themselves
- End of stage 1 marked by the appearance of clear, whitish mucous discharge
- Presentation of lamb in birth canal

Stage 2

- Actual lambing/kidding
- Forceful uterine contractions delivery of offspring

Stage 3

Expulsion of the fetal membranes and placenta

Normal presentation



Dystocia

Lambing difficulty

- Distended uterus from multiple births
- Birthing complicated by disease ketosis (pregnancy toxemia)
- Undialated cervix
- Fetus is large in proportion to the pelvic opening
 - Abnormally small pelvis
 - Fetus or fetuses in abnormal positions
 - Abnormally large fetus

May be more common with certain breeds and management situations

- Stress
- Predators
- Nutrition
- Sire selection



Figure 9. Twins - Front and Back







Figure 4. One Leg Back





Figure 7. Both Forelegs Back

Figure 5. Hind Legs Only

Figure 10. Four Legs - One Head

Figure 6. Head Back

Abnormal Presentations



Figure 3. Breech Presentation

Figure 8. Elbow Lock

Know when to assist

Dam continues to strain

- No waterbag
- No appearance of lamb/kid
- No progress in 1 hour, 30 minutes best.

Abnormal presentation of lamb/kid

Ask: Is assistance really needed

Cleanliness

- Equipment
- People
- Ewe





Know when to assist

Determine:

- Presentation
 - Head first, backwards, or sideways
- Position
 - Right-side up or upside-down
- Posture
 - Where the legs are in relation to the body

Common Mistakes

Allowing dam to labor too long

• Remember, after 1-hour rule

Trying to deliver lamb/kid in abnormal position • Correct position first

Applying too much force

Cause unnecessary trauma to dam or offspring

• Be gentle and take your time

Call a vet if in doubt

After lambing/kidding

Identify new lambs/kids

Dam usually able to care for newborn(s)

• Minimal intervention is recommended

Best to leave alone unless a problem

Remember observation!

- Dam claims offspring
- Offspring nurse 30 minutes to 1 hour after birth
- Look for afterbirth





Neonatal Care

Clip – shorten the navel cord

Dip – dip or spray navel cord with disinfectant

- Iodine or nolvasan
- Strip strip teats, removing wax plug for easier nursing
- Sip newborns
- 10% of body weight in colostrum in first 18 hours
- 10 lb = 16 ounces of colostrum
 - Half by 8 hours old
- Increased mortality associated with little to no colostrum
- Inadequate dam nutrition = impaired colostrum quality and quantity



Neonatal Care

Sit lamb/kid upright if lying down

Clean nose/mouth of mucous

Stimulate weak by rubbing and drying off

Tube feed if necessary

• Has not nursed 4 hr after birth

Will not suckle from bottle

• ***Ensure kid/lamb warm and responsive before tub feeding





Increase Survival

Major causes of mortality

- <u>Starvation</u>, Hypothermia, Trauma
- Scours, pneumonia

Colostrum

- Absorb antibodies from colostrum for first 24 hours
- Strip teats if necessary
- 10 lb lamb/kid needs 10% BW in colostrum
- Too week to nurse, tube or bottle feed if necessary
- Best from momma

Chilled lambs/kids

- Increase body temperature (normal = 102 103)
- Dry them off and warm them up



Increase survival

Observation

Assist with difficult births

Adequate nutrition for dam

- Pre and postpartum
- Dam nutrition affects fetuses and neonates
- Shelter and good husbandry

Predator control

Parasite control

Vaccinations

- CDT + tetanus toxoid 3 6 weeks before lambing/kidding
- Active immunity for dam, passive immunity for offspring



Hypothermia

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Hunched
- Sunken sides
- No suckle reflex
- Down, slow, lethargic
- Unresponsive
- Cold mouth
- Decreased body temperature

TEMPERATURE

- Normal = 102 103
- Hypothermia = 100 101
- Severe hypothermia = < 99</p>

***If temperature below 99, get
to 99 before feeding colostrum
(stomach tube)



Little Orphan Annie

Abandonment, rejection, or dam death

Options?

- Graft to another momma
 - Initiate as soon as possible after birth
 - Graft the largest, strongest kiddo
 - Graft to a singleton momma
 - Use jug or small pen
 - Rub birthing fluids on orphan from adopter dam
- Artificially rear
 - Weakest, smallest lamb
 - 1-2 days old, feed every 4 hours
 - 20% of BW in milk/day
- Sell if available market outlet



Post-lambing management

Monitor closely first few days

Process within first 24 hours if possible

Examine for congenital defects

Records

- Litter size
- Weight
- Apply identification
- Make note of any abnormalities, including difficult birth
- Castrate and dock if desired
 - Avoid if wet weather
 - Best done earlier rather than later





Lamb and Kid Nutrition

First phase:

- COLOSTRUM
 - High nutrient, high antibodies
 - Quality and quantity matters
 - Age of dam, health & metabolic status of dam

Second phase

- Forage and concentrate feeding
- Pre-ruminants until about 8 weeks
 - Ruminations as early as 8 12 d ***if given forages or concentrates
- Encourage rumen development early
 - Forage and creep ration intake
 - Milk alone will discourage rumen development









- Supplemental nutrition for nursing lambs/kids
- Early-born, early weaned
- Artificially reared
- Limited forages
- Under producing mammas

Introduce at least 2 weeks before weaning

More efficient to feed kids/lambs than increase milk production

Minimum 14% CP, > 18 – 20 CP

- Concentrates cracked corn, soybean meal, rolled oats
- High quality pastures
- Highly palatable





Weaning time



Wean by weight, not age

• 2.5 - 3 times birth weight

Dry feed consumption1 % of body weight

Less expensive to feed kids/lambs than dams + offspring

Watch out for high grain finishing diets
10% of the diet should remain roughage

Grain Finishing vs Pasture Finishing

GRAIN

Improved feed efficiency

Increased ADG

Promotes accelerated lamb growth

Internal parasites...

Fatter carcasses

Digestive disturbances



PASTURE

Generally more economical

Slower growth than grain finished

Pasture management

Quality and Quantity

Internal parasites...

Leaner carcasses



General Guidelines

Introduce concentrate diets slowly

10% of ration should remain roughage

Ammonium chloride inclusion (urinary calculi)

Consider coccidiostat

Bunk space

Husbandry

- Clean, dry
- Do not feed directly on ground



Questions?



THE SELF DEFENSE OF SHEEP