

KIDDING MANAGEMENT

Preparing for Kidding

Preparing for kidding should start before does are placed with a buck for breeding. Ensure that a doeling is at 65% or above her full size before breeding her. All does should be in good physical health. Good management practices - proper feeding, clean water, fresh hay, dry pens, suitable bedding - will help ensure a successful kidding season.

Most goats are fall breeders and come into heat at the start of short days. Average gestation is 150 days or five months. For better growth rate, lower mortality rate, as well as comfort for both animal and herder, early spring kidding is preferred. However, if you have appropriate facilities, winter kidding can be accommodated with extra care and attention provided to the does and kids.

Do not forget to do a complete health check on the does four weeks before kidding. Most breeders give 7 or 8-way vaccine, CL vaccine and vitamins about one month to six weeks prior to kidding. This is also a good time to treat for lice and worms.

Readying the Facilities

Kidding pens can be designed for individual does or one big pen for several does. A pen of size 5 x 5ft is sufficient for an individual doe. First time mothers or does with multiple kids may benefit from an individual pen. Always avoid overstocking of kidding does. Clean the pens at least 3-4 weeks before bringing the does in and spread clean straw for bedding. Replace the bedding before putting a new doe into the same pen for kidding. Provide enough shelter to the does and to the kids from harsh weather.

Progression of Birth

Leave the doe alone once the birth is initiated. The kid should be born 30 minutes after the water bag breaks. Front feet hoof pointing downward with head resting on the feet is the normal position of birth. If the hooves are pointing upward the kid is in breach position and assistance may be needed in this situation.

Kidding completes in three phases:

- Relaxing or opening phase - (shows typical signs of birth and can last for a few hours)
- Expulsion phase - (belly muscles contract to expel the kid or kids out and lasts an average of a ½ hr). In delayed expulsion the nose and tongue of the kid can turn bluish, which is normal.
- Expulsion of fetal membranes - (the last delivered kid brings afterbirth with it and sometimes it can take up to 8 hours before the complete fetal membranes are expelled.)

A small amount of bleeding during kidding should be of no concern.

Difficult Births

Adopt aseptic measures and a “no jewellery” policy if assistance is needed. Except for a few the majority of does have no problem kidding. It is normal for young or first time does to take more time in kidding. Assistance is usually provided to adjust the faulty position of legs, neck or to turn the kid into the correct position for delivery. Sometimes the situation can get worse and a veterinarian’s help is needed to perform a caesarean. Cull the does that need frequent assistance during kidding.

SIGNS OF BIRTH

Look for these typical signs that can appear 1-3 days just prior to kidding:

Udder Swelling

Softening of ligaments (Back, Belly & Pelvis)

Swollen vulva

Protruding back & pelvic bones

Reluctance to Eat

Staying away from the herd

Restlessness

Water bag appearance (filled with clear fluid)





BREEDING FOR THE MARKETS

For commercial producers it is crucial to time breeding so that market animals will be available during times of peak demand and prices. The major market for goat meat in Manitoba is the ethnic groups during holidays and festivals. For information on the various ethnic holidays visit the Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives website (www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/livestock/goat/pdf/ethnicdeman.dforlamb2.pdf)

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Things to do Immediately After Birth

As soon as the kid is completely out the umbilical cord should break on its own. Make sure the kid is breathing by cleaning the mouth and nose. In cold weather dry off the ears and tail of the kid as thoroughly as possible to avoid freezing. Let the doe lick the kid; this helps in bonding. Pour or spray antiseptic (tincture of Iodine) on kids' navels to protect from infection. After the birth, check the teats of the mother to see if they are open and she has milk. It is important kids drink the first milk (colostrum) to gain immunity. Ensure enough consumption of colostrum in the first 12 hrs of life: 10-20% of its body weight within 3-12 hours after birth. If the mother does not have enough, use colostrum from another doe.

Vaccination and Weaning

Colostrum from a mother vaccinated in the last trimester of pregnancy will protect the kids from pulpy kidney (enterotoxaemia) and tetanus for the first few weeks. The first shot of vaccine for 7 way or 8 way should be given at 6 weeks of age. The next shot is due at 6 months and then annually.

It is advisable to keep the kidding period as small as four weeks to reduce the labour and record keeping for vaccination. This would also give similar growth rates in all the kids at the time of weaning. The weaning age should be between 3-4 months depending on desired weight gains.

Kidding Supplies

- Propylene glycol or molasses (for treating pregnancy toxemia)
- Calcium borogluconate (for treating milk fever)
- 50% dextrose and antibiotics
- Thermometer, syringes and needles
- Bearing retainer (spoon) or prolapse harness
- Rubber gloves, protective sleeves, or latex gloves
- OB lubrication & OB S-curve needle
- Nylon rope, snare, or leg puller
- Towels and rags
- Heat lamp or warming box
- Gentle iodine (or other disinfectant)
- Frozen colostrum (ewe, doe, or cow)
- Lamb/kid feeding tube
- Lamb/kid milk replacer
- Nipples
- Scale and sling
- Pocket record keeping book
- Monitoring camera; baby monitor

TAGS: Many breeders use tags to identify animals. A mandatory, national identification system is currently being developed and is expected to be in place in 2009.

Additional Resources

Goat Medicine (1994) – Mary C. Smith DVM & David M Sherman DVM MS.
Kidding Management – Dr. Elke Scheurmann, U of Melbourne, Australia.
The Process of Kidding – Melanie Barkley, Ext. Agent, Barkley County, USA