

SMALL RUMINANT TALK

Winter Issue | 2021



Central Region

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Feeding Does through Gestation

Rodney Johnson, Livestock Agent, Central Region, and Small Ruminant Program Coordinator, LSU AgCenter

Early to mid-winter is a time when does should be in early pregnancy. The goal of a wintering program is to economically provide the necessary nutrients to maintain body condition and to keep the animal warm. Most winter feed programs consist of both forages and supplementation. The forages are usually hay or some type of stockpiled brush, while supplements would be whole shelled corn or goat pellets.

Does will generally gain sufficient weight when fed an adequate amount of quality forage. Feeding excessive grain to does can cause fat to be deposited in the udder, leading to reduced milk production. The doe is also more likely to develop pregnancy toxemia or have birthing difficulties.

The four stages of production are open (non-pregnant), early gestation, late gestation, and lactating. Does that are open have the lowest nutrient requirement. They need to gain a little weight to be in good condition for breeding. A medium quality pasture or hay should be sufficient.

The average gestation period of goats is 148 days, and the first 3.5 months are considered the early gestation period. During this time, the embryo(s) grow slowly and there are few observable changes in a doe. The Body Condition Score (BCS) should be 2.5-3. Feeding at this stage should consist of medium quality hay, good pasture, and free choice goat mineral. If supplementation is needed, usually 0.5 – 1.0 lbs. of shelled whole corn or goat pellet is used.

Late gestation is the last 6 weeks of pregnancy and the fetal growth increases exponentially. Nutrition should increase to hopefully achieve an BCS of 3.5. Feeding program at this time should consist of pasture, good hay, free choice mineral, and 1.0 – 1.5 lbs. per day of 14% goat pellet. The last 60 days of gestation will result in 70% of kid growth. Be cautious of over feeding at this stage, the kids should not get too big or could cause kidding problems.

Four weeks prior to kidding, its recommended that the does be vaccinated with CD&T and given BoSe. The CD&T vaccination ensures that the kids will

have tetanus immunity through the colostrum they receive after birth and BoSe prevents white muscle disease in kids.

The lactating doe has the highest nutritional requirement. Does will likely lose body weight due to the high demands of peak lactation (weeks 3 to 8 of lactation) and an inability to consume an adequate amount and quality of forage. Expect the doe to lose 2.0 lbs. of body weight per month during lactation. Inadequate nutrition will decrease body condition, reduce milk production, reduce kid weaning weight and increase kid mortality.

The feeding program during this period should consist of high-quality hay, other available roughage, and 2-3 lbs. of 16% goat pellet. When feeding high levels of grain, gradually increase the intake of grain over a period of at least 1-2 weeks. Milk production of the doe begins to decrease at week 6 of lactation and is very low at 12 weeks. Most kids are weaned by 12 weeks of age.

Just a note to remember is that goats need clean fresh water constantly. Pregnant and lactating does will consume up to 4 gallons of water per day. A lactating goat will require an additional quart of water for every 1 pint of milk produced.

4-H Exhibitors: How to Prepare for Premier Exhibitor Contests

Hannah Devall, Associate Extension Agent, St. Martin Parish 4-H, LSU AgCenter

4-H Livestock projects are in full swing this time of year. Exhibitors are working through their feeding and exercise routines in preparation for the show ring. I like to remind students to spend some time preparing for Premier Exhibitor contests and not wait until the last minute. If you are unfamiliar with Premier Exhibitor, it's an optional and additional contest for livestock exhibitors. Some parishes and districts host contests but this article will focus on preparing students for the sheep and goat premier exhibitor contests held at the LSU AgCenter Livestock Show in February.

This contest is open to exhibitors in 9-12 grades and requires pre-entry prior to January 18th. The registration form is a resume that the student fills out that summarizes their livestock work over the past year. Very often, exhibitors do not spend as much time on their resume as they should but be reminded that these forms are part of your overall score. Focus on your leadership and citizenship work and accomplishments within your project area.

In addition to earning a score on your resume, other sections of the contest include a written test, a skillathon, an interview, and showmanship. A skillathon is where stations are setup and exhibitors work their way through the stations. Some examples of skillathon stations include feed identification, medicine label application, livestock judging, aging, or mouthing, or anatomy identification. These are just examples, so be sure to look for other topics in your project books. Showmanship scores will be taken by class for sheep. Goat exhibitors will specify on their written test which showmanship they will be participating in for their premier exhibitor score.

Interviews are also conducted during this process. During the interviews, judges are looking for exhibitors who can constructively promote animal agriculture and are knowledgeable about their project. Professionalism and communication skills are some areas of preparation to keep in mind.

When preparing for the sheep premier exhibitor contest, the resources to reference are as follows: all current 4-H sheep project books (available from your local 4-H office or www.shop4-H.org), current year LSU AgCenter Livestock Show Catalog, Sheep Premier Exhibitor Study Guide (Livestock Show Office Website or email hdevall@agcenter.lsu.edu for a

SHEEP SHOWMANSHIP 	
APPEARANCE	Appearance- well groomed; clothes neat and clean Merits- brings sheep promptly into ring; works quickly but not abruptly; keeps attention on sheep and judge; quickly corrects faults of sheep; shows animal and not self; gives prompts answers to questions; displays courteous sportsmanlike attitude
SHEEP'S APPEARANCE	Cleanliness- wool clean and free from foreign matter; head, flanks, and legs clean; clean ears, nose, and feet
SHOWING LAMB	Posing & Changing Positions- sheep properly setup at all times; responds to handling and under control; shown from front when judge views from rear or left side otherwise shown from left side only; shown from a standing or bent knee position; led into the showing on the left side with the left hand under the jaw and the right hand behind the head; braced by extending fingers and applying slight pressure to muscles on side of neck or jaw
COOPERATION WITH JUDGE	Keeps body from obstructing view of own sheep and others'; shows awareness of judge's position and hand signals; moves sheep upon direction of judge

copy), and the Sheep Premier Exhibitor Feed and Nutrition document (Livestock Show Office website). If you have any questions regarding the state sheep premier exhibitor contest, please contact Mrs. Hannah Devall in St. Martin Parish (hdevall@agcenter.lsu.edu).

If preparing for the goat premier exhibitor contest, the resources to reference are as follows: all current 4-H goat project books (available from your local 4-H office or www.shop4-H.org), current year LSU AgCenter Livestock Show Catalog, www.goatworld.com, equipment find on www.premier1supplies.com, and breeds find at www.111.ansi.okstate.edu/breeds/goats. If you have any questions regarding the state goat premier exhibitor contest, please contact Mrs. Brittany Zaunbrecher in Cameron Parish (bzaunbrecher@agcenter.lsu.edu).

Premier Exhibitor is another way for 4-H members to showcase the dedication and knowledge gained through their 4-H projects. If you are looking for more information on the livestock premier exhibitor program, check on our website https://www.lsuagcenter.com/portals/our_offices/departments/livestock-show-office/premierexhibitor.

2021 LSU State Livestock Show – Sheep and Goat Schedule

Due to concerns with COVID-19, schedules and times are subject to be changed by Show Management

Please note: Given the health concerns with COVID-19, there is no guarantee that the LSU State Livestock Show will occur as advertised. With that in mind, all livestock show participants and families should note that purchase and/or validation of animals is at their own risk and financial investment.

The following rules will apply to all shows:

- No cooking, group meeting, or social gathering will be allowed on the show grounds during the 2021 LSU AgCenter State Livestock Show.
- All shows will be show and go as much as possible to minimize time on show grounds.
- Each exhibitor will be allowed two (2) parent/guardians to accompany them while on the show grounds.
- **All schedules are TENTATIVE and subject to change up until show.**

Friday, February 12th

All sheep may arrive	12:00 - 6:00 pm
Scales open to weigh Market Lambs; Check in Breeding Sheep	2:00 - 6:00 pm
All weigh cards must be turned in	6:00 pm
Sheep Showmanship	6:30 pm

Saturday, February 13th

Judge Market Lambs followed by Breeding Sheep	8:00 am
Market Goats arrive	2:00 - 6:00 pm
Scales open to weigh Market Goats	4:00 - 6:00 pm
All weigh cards must be turned in	6:00 pm

Sunday, February 14th

Market Goat Show followed by Market Goat Showmanship	8:00 am
Breeding Goats (Meat) arrive	8:00 am - 5:00 pm
Check in Breeding Goats (Meat)	2:00 - 5:00 pm
All Breeding Goats (Meat) must be in the barn	5:00 pm
Breeding Goat Showmanship (Meat)	6:00 pm

Monday, February 15th

Judge Breeding Goat Show (Meat)	8:00 am
Breeding Goats (Dairy) arrive	8:00am - 5:00 pm
Check in Breeding Goats (Dairy)	2:00 - 5:00 pm
All Breeding goats (Dairy) must be in the barn	5:00 pm
Breeding Goat Showmanship (Dairy)	6:00 pm

Tips for Optimizing Your Lambing and Kidding Seasons

Ashley Edwards, PhD, Assistant Extension Agent and Coordinator, LSU AgCenter

The new year often means preparing for a new lambing or kidding season. While most of the lambs and kids may not hit the ground until March or April, now is the time to check supplies and get ready for what will hopefully be a successful season. Begin by cleaning and decluttering your barns and pens. Ideally, designate or create individual jugs (small pens) with a heat lamp to house each ewe/doe and her lambs/kids as soon as you can after they are born. If you have estimated due dates, place the ewe/doe into a pen a day or two prior to when she is due so you can better observe the nursing and health of the offspring during the first couple of days. Do not forget to include a feed trough and water in each pen. Use tarps or plywood to create a wind block for open-sided areas when it is feasible to do so. If using heat lamps, be sure the cords are out of reach from the animals and place heat lamps in a safe location to prevent fires.

Check your working facilities and all equipment that you may need to ensure it is in working condition. Look through your lambing/kidding kit to see if you need to order any supplies. In addition to the supplies in this kit, general medical supplies should include iodine solution, non-irritant antiseptic, and injectable antibiotics. A pair of coveralls and rain gear for yourself are also helpful.

Considerations for your Lambing/Kidding Kit

Obstetric gloves	Paper towels
Lubricant	Old bath towels
Colostrum replacers	Heating pad or blanket
Milk replacers	5- to 10-gallon bucket
Electrolytes	Flashlight with extra batteries
Bottle and nursing nipple	Obstetric chains and handles

Using frozen colostrum or milk collected from other ewes/does is a better option compared to powdered replacers if they are available or easy to collect. However, this is not always a feasible option. If you can keep a small supply in your freezer, make it easily accessible and ensure that you thaw it properly. Thaw slowly over the stove or in short one-minute bursts in a microwave. Remember to stir periodically and only warm it to approximately 105-110°F. Higher temperatures can degrade proteins and other nutrients essential to lambs and kids. Colostrum intake is most beneficial within the first six hours of life, but when this is not possible, a minimum of 12 hours is acceptable. Waiting longer than 12 hours decreases the lamb's/kid's ability to absorb the nutrients that establish its immune system.

Finally, make sure your lambing or kidding protocol is updated. This should include any necessary contact information for your veterinarian and anyone who can assist when needed. Do not forget to include plans for management during cases of dystocia or nursing difficulties. Taking the time to review your health protocols with your veterinarian is invaluable. Checking equipment, preparing supplies, and having a plan of action are vital steps towards optimizing a lambing or kidding season. A few more key things to remember are where the kit and supplies are located, how long to wait before you intervene and assist, the best methods for pulling a lamb/kid, and who to call when you need help.

Pseudopregnancy in Goats

Clare Scully, DVM, Assistant Professor, LSU School of Veterinary Medicine

What is it?

- Pseudopregnancy is a common pathological condition in goats that may develop in does with or without exposure to a buck.
- The condition is characterized by accumulation of fluid in the uterus.
- Other names for this condition include hydrometra, mucometra and “cloudburst.”

When should you suspect it?

- Does with pseudopregnancy may have signs of pregnancy (no heat cycles, abdominal enlargement, mammary gland enlargement, etc.).
- Blood tests for pregnancy may be positive.
- Sometimes the fluid in the uterus is spontaneously released by the doe and a clear, slightly cloudy or slightly blood-tinged fluid will be seen coming from the vulva.
- Older does are more prone to development of the condition than yearlings.
- Out-of-season breeding, delayed breeding until after the first or second estrous cycle during the fall breeding season, and use of hormones to manipulate the estrus cycle may increase the risk of pseudopregnancy

How is pseudopregnancy diagnosed and treated?

- Examination of the doe with an ultrasound is the only way to differentiate between true pregnancy and pseudopregnancy. Examination for pregnancy should be performed 25-40 days after breeding using the transrectal method or 40-70 days after breeding using the transabdominal method.
 - Treatment involves the use of luteolytic drugs.
 - If you suspect pseudopregnancy in a doe, please contact your veterinarian for accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment.
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For more information please contact

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