

Goatvetoz Spring Newsletter

Goat Veterinary Consultancies - goatvetoz

Spring 2020

Dystocia

Dystocia, or difficult kidding, can have many different causes. Sometimes the cause is the doe, sometimes the kid and sometimes it is just bad luck. Commercial goat farmers need maximum live kids to be as economic as possible. They should be performing a wet and dry exam on all does at marking time when kids and does are brought into the yards. Any commercial does without an udder should have a brightly coloured zip tie put on its ear tag so they are easy to see at weaning and can be sold as cull does.

Pet goat owners want to know if they can safely rebreed a doe that has had a difficult kidding or if they should retire her.

The causes of dystocia are many and some you can do something about and some you can't. Does should not be too fat nor too thin at kidding – a body condition score of 3.5 is ideal (1 too thin - 5 obese). Does and bucks should be of similar size and females should only be mated once they have reached at least 60% of their expected mature body weight. If despite these precautions, the kid's head or hips can't get through the doe's pelvis then the doe should be culled or retired.

In sheep, rams are given Australian Sheep Breeding Values for lambing ease and lamb body weight. Similarly for beef cattle. All goat owners should keep good records of all kiddings, including deaths and kid weights although many won't have the numbers for genetic selection. I have an Excel spreadsheet I can provide.

If there is a malpresentation i.e. 2 kids are coming at once or a kid has its head twisted to 1 side, then this is just bad luck and the doe is not at fault.

Vaginal & cervical prolapse is a condition that is the fault of the doe. It may not happen every time, especially if only 1 kid the next pregnancy but generally the vaginal or cervical prolapse gets worse in subsequent pregnancies. It is listed as a cause of difficult lambings in ewes. However in my experience, if properly treated early and no infection occurs, then a safe delivery can be expected.

Some kidding difficulties are nutritional. In ewes, oestrogenic clovers are associated with failure of the cervix to dilate and weak uterine contractions. However goats dislike clovers and will seek out grasses and browse if given a choice. Be careful to choose a low oestrogenic clover if buying hay.

Danger Signs at Kidding

The most important danger sign is a dirty yellow vaginal mucus. The yellow is meconium staining. Meconium is the first dark of a newborn kid and is made up of the shed gut lining cells. If some is pushed out of the kid's anus before the kid is born it stains the kid's skin and the fluid in the sac. Sometimes dead kids are found in the paddock with a dirty yellow colour and this is a sign the kid died from a delayed and difficult kidding.

Meconium staining also occurs in humans as well. It happened to me with my first child – I had some dirty yellow mucus so when I got to hospital, lots of monitors were added to me to check on the baby and then there was a quick forceps delivery.

The other thing to watch for is a prolonged second stage labour. If the doe is really pushing i.e. crying out, lying down and straining but there's no progress in 30 mins, she needs assistance.

Calcium is needed for strong muscle contractions, including uterine muscles. Calcium levels in the pregnant doe must be adequate. A 60kg dry non-pregnant doe only needs 2.4 grams of calcium a day but she needs 7.8 grams in late pregnancy. Once making milk she needs 16.5 grams a day, so if her udder is full before birth, she may have used up all her most easily accessed reserves. Classic milk fever as occurs with dairy cows with the cow down and weak, is rare in goats, but weak uterine contractions in kidding does can occur, especially in older does with multiple kids.

Other causes of difficult kidding can be associated with conditions where the kid is deformed. Akabane virus infections in pregnant does can result in kids where their limbs are deformed and bent as shown in the following photo. As this virus is spread by midges it occurs mainly in northern Australia. If goats are infected early in life they become immune and their kids won't be affected. However in border areas like northern NSW or when pregnant does are introduced into a subtropical or tropical area from temperate area with no midges, then kids with bent legs unable to be straightened are formed. Often the head is domed as well.

Anglo-Nubian kids with deformed legs can be formed if they have beta-mannosidosis, a genetic disease found in this

breed. I have a video of an Anglo-Nubian kid with beta-mannosidosis on my YouTube channel - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ci7Frhii19o>. This is a recessive single gene condition and the sire should not be used again. The doe is also a carrier.

Kids with either of these conditions must be put to sleep as there is no treatment.

The problem is that these affected kids may become stuck as the front legs are not straight and therefore the kid is trying to be born in a position where it is wider than normal.

There are some exotic viruses that also cause problems in kids similar to akabane virus including Cache virus from the USA and Schmallenberg virus from Europe & the UK. If you have such a kid and are in Australia, contact your nearest government veterinarian or stock inspector who will arrange a necropsy and tests. Often this will be at no charge to you due to their desire to investigate the cause to rule out exotic diseases.



Uterine Prolapse

Uterine prolapse occurs after kidding, whereas cervical or vaginal prolapse occurs before kidding. Generally a uterine prolapse occurs very soon after kidding and certainly in the first 24 hours. Goat owners may confuse the uterus with the foetal membranes especially as the caruncles on the uterine wall look like the cotyledons on the placenta. A retained placenta is a predisposing factor making the confusion worse. Other predisposing factors are low blood calcium levels and high oestrogenic clovers.

This is obviously an emergency and a vet is needed ASAP. After a spinal block, a vet can replace the uterus. There is a good prognosis in most cases and the doe can even have a normal kidding next year. The exception is if the uterus is torn in which case it must be surgically removed. First aid therefore is to protect the uterus before the vet gets there. Restrain the doe so she doesn't stand on the uterus. Place a clean sheet or towel underneath it and very gently clean off any dirt or manure with diluted antiseptic.

Fortunately uterine prolapse is very rare in does, much less frequent than in cows or ewes.

Do you get my Tweets?

Do you use twitter on your mobile phone? What was your favourite Tweet last season?

Mine was How to Give an Intra-muscular Injection to a Goat

<https://youtu.be/0vuYNDdMT78> via @YouTube

See all my tweets at

www.twitter.com/goatvet