

Goatvetoz Autumn Newsletter

Goat Veterinary Consultancies - goatvetoz

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Pregnancy testing

Goats can be checked to see if they are pregnant by a variety of ways including:

- Blood test
- Milk test
- Ultrasound
- Ballotment

or just wait 150 days. Each method has their own advantages and disadvantages.

Blood tests should not be for progesterone (the pregnancy hormone) as otherwise a false pregnancy can show up as positive. It is better to test for the hormone made from the foetus' placenta. In Australia, a blood sample can be posted to a commercial service at 30 days after mating e.g. to www.pregtest.com.au.

Alternatively a milk sample with a preservative (supplied by the lab) can be sent to a lab for testing. Many herd recording services world-wide offer this pregnancy testing service at an additional charge. This is accurate from 35 days post mating. In Australia, Dairy Express (1800 633 165) provide this service.

In my opinion the best option is to have your vet ultrasound the does. An abdominal or external ultrasound probe can identify pregnancy at 40-45 days and at around 45 days you can count the number of foetuses. The vet can also give an injection of

prostaglandin if a false pregnancy or cloudburst is found- see page 2.

The least accurate method is abdominal ballotment or the bump test and this only works in late pregnancy. See my video on how to do this - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iXJhd_svlOI.

Bloat

There are 3 types of bloat and each has separate treatments:

1 Frothy bloat due to lush feed - treatment is drenching with any vegetable oil (100-200mls) and then massage the abdomen. If you have no vegetable oil, you can try 10 mls of washing up detergent. Raise front feet if the goat is having trouble breathing (due to gas in rumen pressing on the lungs), while the oil starts to work.

2 Secondary bloat or choke due to something stuck in the oesophagus e.g. a piece of carrot, apple, or root vegetable. First aid treatment is again oil to lubricate the stuck item. Tan also be due to something pressing on the oesophagus such as a tumour or cheesy

My wether still acts like a buck-why?

There can be a variety of reasons that a buck kid that was castrated acts like a buck.

Firstly it could have a retained testicle i.e. it is still in the abdomen producing male hormones. Testicles are formed up near the kidneys in the foetus and slowly migrate down into the scrotum and a retained testicle can be anywhere along this path. Sometimes the adrenal glands can increase the amount of testosterone they normally produce.

But the most common reason is that bucks kids are just repeating learned behaviours. Mounting other goats is not always for sex as it is a key method for establishing dominance over other goats.

Bucks smell because they urinate on themselves and also from the musk glands at the back of the horns. Wethers shouldn't smell.

gland (CLA) abscess in which case surgery is needed. Only as a last resort should a large gauge needle be inserted into the rumen.

The 3rd type of bloat is abomasal bloat in kids on milk replacer - cause is uncertain although some bacteria (*Clostridial* or *Sarcina*) have been suggested. Vet treatment is needed e.g. antispasmodics, pain relief, antibiotics.

Abortions

The pregnancy maintaining hormone (progesterone) is produced only by the corpus luteum on the ovary of the doe. The corpus luteum is a small body produced after the egg is released. In sheep and cows the progesterone is mainly produced by the placenta in late pregnancy.

Unfortunately the doe's corpus luteum can be destroyed by stress hormones. Rangeland goats, if cold and wet &/or with poor nutrition, will often abort. Other breeds will more likely come down with pregnancy toxemia rather than abort. If goats are chased by dogs or transported they can abort.

There are a wide range of other causes of abortions in goats. All cases of abortion should be investigated for a number of reasons. The first abortion may be the start of an abortion storm,

when most goats will lose their kids. The sooner the cause is found the sooner treatment can be given (if there is any) or prevention strategies put in place for next year. Many of the causes of abortions are zoonotic (can infect people) so to protect yourself and your family, you must rule these diseases out or identify them quickly.

If you find a doe that has aborted you should put on gloves and a mask and pick up the foetus plus any placenta and put it inside 2 large thick plastic bags. The outside bag should be sprayed with disinfectant then kept cool e.g. in an esky with some crushed ice. Contact your vet and arrange for it to be sent to a veterinary laboratory.

Studies of past abortion cases in goats overseas found that a diagnosis was not found in about half the cases due mainly to lack of lesions. Bacterial causes were the main findings were Q-Fever (*Coxiella burnetti*) and Chlamydia infections. Many animals carry Q-Fever including wild life, pets and livestock

Toxoplasmosis was a minor cause of abortions. The single celled parasite, *Toxoplasma gondii*, are carried by cats but when they infect pregnant goats they cause abortions. Therefore keep cats out of goat and feed sheds.

Cloudburst

A cloudburst is a false pregnancy where the female goat retains the corpus luteum that is formed after ovulation and goes on to accumulate fluid in her uterus. This happens whether the doe is mated or not, and she stops coming into heat (oestrus). Generally the doe goes over its due date and then suddenly releases its uterine fluid and the owner finds the doe with wet flanks & rear, but no kids.

This can be a serious problem in commercial dairy goat farms or when goats are kept for household milk production as the owner assumes the doe is pregnant and dries her up to prepare for the next kidding (which doesn't happen).

A vet can easily diagnose a false pregnancy using an ultrasound and give a prostaglandin injection to destroy the retained corpus luteum. The ultrasound is best done before drying up any milkers and before the end of the breeding season.

Do you get my Tweets ?

Do you use twitter on your mobile phone? What was your favourite Tweet last season? See all my tweets at www.twitter.com/goatvet

Intraperitoneal injection of a goat kid- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30vjr-9byhA> -A cold snap is coming