

Goatvetoz Autumn Newsletter

Goat Veterinary Consultancies - goatvetoz

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Contracted tendons of kids

Weak legs and contracted tendons are not uncommon in newborn goat kids. This is due to the legs being bent up in the womb. Very large kids or multiple kids are more likely affected as they are squashed more in the womb. Keep kids that can't walk properly confined and don't allow them to walk too much i.e. put them in a pen with the recently kidded doe on deep bedding. If very severe, keep in a box that they can't jump out of but the doe can reach in and lick them. You will need to lift the kids out multiple times a day to suckle until the muscles and tendons have strengthened. It is important to put all the kids in the box so the mother doesn't reject the affected kid. If these kids start walking too early, it can make the limbs slower to strengthen or mean they may need splinting by a veterinarian to recover. However most kids walk normally after a couple of days. Massaging to try and straighten the contracted tendons can help.

I am often asked about giving these kids mineral supplements. However white muscle disease (WMD) due to selenium and/or vitamin E deficiency is rare in newborn kids. Kids about 2 weeks old can have white muscle disease but generally they have their heart muscles affected and just drop dead. Blood samples can be taken from the doe and kid to test for Vitamin E levels and for an enzyme that needs selenium. WMD can be diagnosed by blood testing for both vitamin E levels and for the selenium containing enzyme. Deficiency of vitamin E was defined in sheep as a plasma Vitamin E concentration less than 0.7 mg/L. Selenium deficiency was defined as whole blood glutathione peroxidase (GPx) activity less than 50 U/L or 60 U/L in some textbooks. Two different blood bottles (for blood and plasma) must be used. WMD is defined in sheep as a deficiency of both. Vit E is in green grass so if in drought or dry times that last a few months, deficiencies can occur.

I don't like injections of selenium as it is very toxic and prefer to prevent with selenium boluses for pregnant does or vaccines or worm drenches with added selenium. To treat kids I am happy to inject with vitamin E (34-68 mgs so 34mgs for a mini kid) but would only treat with selenium injections after a confirmed diagnosis i.e. a post mortem examination shows white streaks in the heart muscle. White muscle disease that affects the legs generally affects kids from 2 to 16 weeks of age and again white streaks are found in the leg muscles.

Copper deficiency can sometimes affect newborn kids and they can't stand and soon die from cold stress. More commonly kids are born normal but weeks or months later develop a hind limb paralysis and sit up like a dog begging. They are bright and alert but can't control their hind legs. Nothing is seen on a post mortem but samples of the spinal cord examined under

a microscope at a laboratory show damaged nerves.

Supplementing kids with selenium or copper is generally too late to improve these kids and these minerals are very toxic, especially if given by injection. Selenium and copper deficiency should first be diagnosed by a veterinarian before any supplementation. Pregnant does should be given access to either a mineral lick or mineral mix suitable for your particular region, in consultation with your vet.

What is the Peri-Parturient Rise?

Evolution has helped parasites immensely and parasites have a much shorter generation interval than goats, so the parasites are evolving faster. One of their main advantages that they have evolved is the peri-parturient rise. This occurs both with gastro-intestinal worms and with coccidia. Basically when goats are close to kidding the parasites in the pregnant or recently doe suddenly start producing more eggs or oocysts (the proper terms for coccidia eggs). From the parasites viewpoint this ensures that the next generation is infected.

So for a period of around 2 to 4 weeks prior to kidding and for 6 weeks after kidding, does will be producing large amounts of eggs. Also any 3rd stage larvae

worms that were hibernation in the gut wall will emerge, mature and start laying eggs. Does may suffer from this increased parasite load at this time so take of these does and check their FAMACHA© scores at least weekly if possible. If you have large numbers of goats check a % of the slower or weaker goats. Ideally do worm egg counts as well, either group or individual ones.

This time is when large goat herds should consider feeding BioWorma® even if it is too expensive to feed all the time. Feeding BioWorma® means that around 86% of the larvae hatching out from these extra eggs are killed in the faeces, making it harder for the worms to contaminant the pastures for the young kids.

BioWorma® won't help with coccidia so to control coccidia it is necessary to improve overall hygiene. Coccidia oocysts are destroyed by the sun so ideally make sure the sun can reach into the back of goats sheds. Sheds should be cleaned out ready for the kidding season and fresh bedding added. Remove all visible faecal contamination as oocysts can last from 1 kidding season to the next. They are only killed by some disinfectants.

Do you use X ?

See all my tweets at <https://x.com/goatvet> or goatvetoZ on other channels.

What can your goat's eye tell you?

The eyes of goats can tell you a lot about their health. Many goat owners will be aware of the FAMACHA© technique of determining if goats need treating for barber's pole worms. Basically you look at the mucous membrane colour of the inner surface of the eye lids of goats and if they are bright pink to red, barber's pole worm treatments is not given and these goats are selectively used for breeding as they are more resilient to barbers pole worms. If the mucous membrane colour is light pink to white, treatment is needed, generally for barbers pole worms (although liver fluke can also cause anaemia).

Jaundice (yellowing of the blood) can be identified in similar way i.e. yellow mucous membranes. Often this is associated with liver damage from poisonous plants e.g. lantana. Nystagmus, where the eye moves involuntarily back and forth, can occur if nervous diseases are present such as Vitamin B1 (thiamine) deficiency.