

Lambing/Kidding Time Management and Obstetrics

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Lambing Management

-Time investment is key

- How often will you check ewes?

-Important for financial success

- lbs of lamb weaned per ewe

-Must save as many lambs as possible to maximize profits

*What are your goals for lamb mortality (# dead)?

Lambing Management

The largest percent of lambs are lost at or shortly after birth

- Difficult births

- Starvation

- Hypothermia

- Kids: Predators, infectious causes (chlamydia, leptospirosis, toxoplasmosis, brucella)

- Starvation and hypothermia can be corrected by the manager

Preventing Lamb/Kid Loss

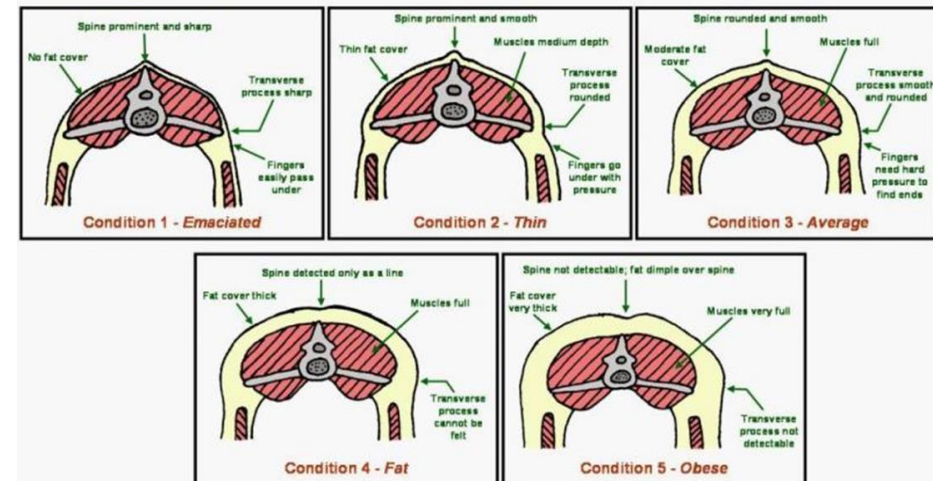
Adequate nutrition particularly in 3rd trimester

Condition at lambing/kidding is the most important determinant of lamb/kid survival (effect on birth weight)

Lambs need BAT (brown adipose tissue)

- First source of energy of lamb
- Utilized to produce heat
- Ewe must have adequate BCS and mineral supplementation for lamb to have BAT

Body Condition Scores – Sheep/Goats



Adapted from "Body Condition Scoring of Sheep" by J.M. Thompson and H. Meyer (Oregon State University)



Body Condition Scoring

For Spring Lambing

Group	Timing	Ideal BCS
Breeding Ewes	Pre-Breeding	3
	Midpregnancy	2.5-3
	Pre-Lambing	3
	Lambing	3+
	Weaning/Drying off	2+
Rams	Pre-Breeding	3-3.5
	Summer	2+

Research and BCS

Oregon State University

-Ewes with a body condition score of 3 to 4 at lambing lost fewer offspring and weaned more pounds of lamb than those with a condition score of 2.5 or less

-There was a 33% difference in total weight of lamb weaned (64 versus 85 pounds per ewe) between ewes with pre-lambing body condition scores of 2.5 to 3.5

*Improved BCS improved lamb survival



Fat and Thin Ewes Reasons and Consequences



Why are ewes too thin?

- Inadequate nutrition, parasitism, inadequate bunk space, inadequate grouping of animals, wasting diseases, chronic diseases, genetics, high milk production (multiple lambs), old (need to be culled)
- This sets them up for: failure to conceive, less lbs lamb weaned, pregnancy toxemia, parasitism and disease

Why are ewes too fat?

- Were not culled, poor milk production (low wean wt), overfed in early-midgestation, dominant ewes
- This sets them up for: pregnancy toxemia, fatty liver, dystocia, vaginal prolapse

Pre-Lambing Reminders

- Vaccinate with CD&T vaccine 4-6 weeks prior to parturition
- Shear woolled ewes about 1 month prior to lambing or crutching (remove wool around vulva and udder)
- Famacha check prior to and shortly after lambing/kidding because of periparturient rise in worm eggs near time of lambing (feed higher protein diet prior to lambing)
- Consider feeding a coccidiostat during late gestation and early lactation
- Daily exercise is important prior to parturition
- Minimize stressors (adequate bunk space, stable grouping, parasite control, excellent nutrition, adequate mineral supplementation)



Lambing/Kidding Facilities

- Must be CLEAN and DRY
- Eliminate drafts
- Lambing jugs (pens): Need enough for 10% of herd (5x5 for larger ewes)

Lambing/Kidding on pasture

- Lamb/Kid on clean, well rested pasture
- Access to shelter is necessary
- Jug animals with problem births

**Don't leave in jugs too long (exposure to parasites/ventilation concerns)



Who is most likely to have problems with difficult birth?

- Yearling mothers
- Obese animals
- Lack of exercise in late pregnancy
- Inadequate nutrition



**Do not intervene as long as progress is being made

Causes of Dystocia

- Failure of cervix to dilate or dilate completely
- Lamb with large head or shoulders (fetal disproportion)
- Twins coming simultaneously
- Animals disturbed during the initial stage of lambing
- Lamb in abnormal presentation, position, or posture (malpresentation)

Others include vaginal prolapse and deformities



Stages of the Birthing Process

Stage 1 (1-8 hours): Cervical dilation

- Separate from herd, uneasiness
- Kicking and pawing at ground
- Lying down and getting up frequently
- Urinating or attempts at it
- Some vaginal discharge

*Intervene if stage 1 is longer than 8 hours



Stages of the Birthing Process

Stage 2 (1/2-2 hours)- 15-30 mins per lamb

-Lamb in birth canal

-Active contractions

-Appearance of water sac, feet

*Intervene when:

- Active labor for 30 minutes and no progress
- Water sac observed for >1 hour and no pushing
- Swelling from tongue of lamb, 3 feet, a tail
- Showing signs of severe distress or fatigue



Stages of the Birthing Process

Stage 3 (1/2-1 hour)

-Passing of the fetal membranes

-When should you be concerned?



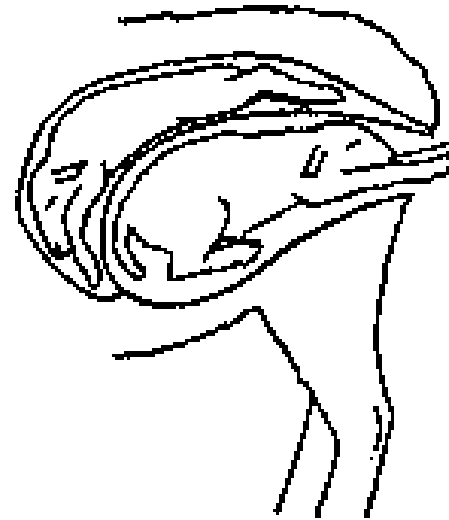
Tips for Examination

- Clip excess or dirty hair/wool from around anus
- Remove all dirt around vulva and anus
- Scrub hands or arms before entering vulva and wear OB sleeves
- Apply liberal amounts of lube (put handfuls into vagina/uterus before manipulating)
- Shape the hand into a natural wedge
- Push forward in between contractions
- Determine presentation, position and posture

*Best to manipulate lambs with ewe standing or elevating hindquarters



Normal Birth Presentation



Determine Presentation, Position, and Posture

Presentation: Head first (anterior)



Position: Right-side up (dorsal-sacral)

Posture: Right limb flexed back

How is this corrected?

Breech Lambs/Kids

P: Butt first (posterior)

P: Upside down (dorsal-pubic); Right side up (dorsal-sacral)

P: Hindlimbs facing head of dam



P: Hindlimbs first (posterior)

P: Right side up (dorsal-sacral)

P: Hindlimbs exiting pelvis

More common with 2+ lambs



Determine if front or hindlimbs coming through first

Front limbs: Joints flex in the same direction

Hind limbs: Joints flex opposite of each other

Make sure limbs are connected to head/shoulder that is present

With twins+ any combination of front and hind limbs may be present

If unable to determine the 3 p's or unable to successfully correct the problem within 20 mins seek professional help

How are these corrected?



Obstetrics Pointers

- Stretch vulva up over head when lamb is coming out
- If large lamb, rotate the lamb so the hips (and potentially shoulders) are in a diagonal position coming through the pelvis
- Pull when the ewe is having active contractions
- After pulling lamb use straw or stick to stimulate (pressure point just inside the nose)
- Check for spares (more lambs) and tears
- Be clean and don't muck around too long (lambs will die or uterus will tear)
- Questions about delivering lambs, additional pointers????

Post-Lambing Management

-Make sure licking and grooming ALL lambs

-Within a few hours of birth, make sure lambs have nursed and ingested COLOSTRUM

- Clear wax plug if needed
- Milk into mouth and help latch
- Make sure full belly on palpation

Post-Lambing/Kidding Management

- Place in jug (mismothering can cause losses), unless pasture lambing/kidding
 - Can take up to 6 hours for a ewe to recognize her lamb(s)
 - Twice as long for lamb to recognize its mother
 - Low chance for survival if not accepted by ewe
- Dip navel (7% iodine)
- Tag lambs
- Give injectable selenium/vitamin E (if desired)
- Check health status multiple times throughout day for first few days

*Give intranasal vaccine if respiratory disease is a problem in pre-weaned lambs

Colostrum

-Supplies the energy, proteins (antibodies for immunity), and fat to help the lamb thermo-regulate

-Timely ingestion of colostrum is key for thermo-regulation

-The ability to absorb antibodies from colostrum diminishes as its body temperature becomes colder

-Stress from cold or a difficult birth can interfere with optimum absorption

- Can lead to problems with
 - Scours
 - Pneumonia
 - Other infections

Colostrum Supplementation

- Ideally use stored colostrum from ewes (frozen colostrum)
 - Thaw in warm water bath
- Can also use cow/goat colostrum or colostrum replacer
- Give 20-25 mL (cc) per lb of body weight (7-8 ounces to a 10 lb lamb)
 - Approximately 30 mL per ounce
 - ~200 mL for a 10 lb lamb



**Lambs must be >99 F to absorb colostrum (be aware of hypothermia)

Why do Lambs get Hypothermic/Starved?

- Fails to nurse (ingest colostrum) shortly after birth
- Secondary to dystocia
- Prolonged birth
- Poor mothers (must lick and dry lamb off)
- Cold weather, particularly windy or precipitation (drafts in barns, etc)
- Lambs/Kids born to ewes/does with poor nutrition during gestation
- Lambs/Kids born to ewes in poor BCS (don't have or can't utilized BAT)

Indications of Hypothermia/Starvation

- Hunched posture
- Hollowed out sides
- No suckle reflex
- Excessive calling
- Skin Tent
- Down or slow to rise
- Unresponsive, flat-out

First Determine if a Lamb is Cold

- Put fingers in mouth and feel if cold
- Take a rectal temperature (put thermometer deep into rectum)
 - Normal temperature soon after birth 102-103 F
 - Definitely must warm up if <100 (dry off first)
 - Don't feed colostrum if lamb is <99
- Is lamb able to stand or suckle?

*Don't tube a cold lamb, it will probably lead to death.....



Dry off lamb

If Temperature >99 F and can Stand

- Collect milk or colostrum from dam and feed (use alternative source if necessary)
 - Feed by stomach tube
 - Put in warming box or warm up until temp reaches 101
 - Return to mother
- If temp is <99 , still standing**
- Warm up first to 99 F ad then feed by stomach tube



For Newborn Lambs

If temp <99 and unable to stand/swallow

- Put in warming box (checking temp every 20 mins)
- Collect colostrum from mother
- Tube feed at 99
- Warm to 101
- Return to Mother if bright and standing well



-If lamb is >5 hours of age

- Can give IP injection of dextrose or put sugar on the tongue before placing in warming box

Hypothermia: How to Warm Lambs/Kids up

- Warming box or crate
- Heat lamp, electric blanket, warm water bottle, heated towels
- Warm water bath
- Floor board of the truck with heaters
- Near fireplace in the house/garage



Warming Box

*Warm to 101-102 and make sure it maintains body temperature

Any Questions?

