



# KIDDING MANAGEMENT

## *Preparing for Kidding*

Most goats are fall breeders and come into heat at the start of short days. Average gestation is 150 days or five months. For better growth rate, lower mortality rate, as well as comfort for both animal and herder, early spring kidding is preferred. However, if you have appropriate facilities, winter kidding can be accommodated with extra care and attention provided to the does and kids. For commercial producers it is crucial to time breeding so that market animals will be available during times of peak demand and prices. The major market for goat meat in Manitoba is the ethnic groups during holidays and festivals. For information on the various ethnic holidays visit the Manitoba Agriculture and Rural Initiatives (MAFRI) website at (<http://www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/livestock/goat/pdf/ethnicdemandforlamb2.pdf>).

Before introducing the buck for breeding ensure that all does are in good physical health, and doeling are at least 65% of their mature weight before being bred. Normal good management practices—proper feeding, clean water, fresh hay, dry pens, suitable bedding and health care—will help ensure a successful kidding season. Do not forget to do a complete health check on does 4-6 weeks before kidding that include hoof care, vaccination, lice and worm control.

## *Readying the Facilities*

Kidding pens can be designed for individual does or one big pen for several does. A pen of size 5 x 5ft is sufficient for an individual doe. First time mothers or does with multiple kids may benefit from an individual pen. Always avoid overstocking of kidding does. Clean the pens at least 3-4 weeks before bringing the does in and spread clean straw for bedding. Replace the bedding before putting a new doe into the same pen for kidding. Provide enough shelter to the does and to the kids from harsh weather.

## *Birthing*

### **Signs of Birth**

Look for these typical signs that can appear 1-3 days prior to kidding.

Udder Swelling	Softening of ligaments (Back, Belly & Pelvic)
Swollen vulva	Protruding back & pelvic bones
Reluctance to Eat	Staying away from the herd
Restlessness	Water bag appearance (filled with clear fluid)

### **Progression of Birth**

Leave the doe alone once the birth is initiated. The kid should be born 30 minutes after the water bag breaks. Front feet hoof pointing downward with head resting on the feet is the normal position of birth. If the hoofs are pointing upward the kid is in breach position and assistance may be needed in this situation.

Kidding completes in three phases:

- Relaxing or opening phase- (shows typical signs of birth and can last for a few hours)
- Expulsion phase- (belly muscles contract to expel the kid or kids out and lasts an average of a ½ hr). In delayed expulsion the nose and tongue of the kid can turn bluish, which is normal.
- Expulsion of fetal membranes- (the last delivered kid brings afterbirths with it and sometimes it can take up to 8 hrs before the complete fetal membranes are expelled.)

A small amount of bleeding during kidding should be of no concern.



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## Difficult Births

Adopt aseptic measures and a “no jewelry” policy if assistance is needed. Except for a few majority of does have no problem kidding. It is normal for young or first time does to take more time in kidding. Assistance is usually provided to adjust the faulty position of legs, neck or to turn the kid into the correct position for delivery. Sometimes the situation can get worse and a veterinarian’s help is needed to perform a caesarean. Cull the does that need frequent assistance during kidding.

## Things to do Immediately after Birth

As soon as the kid is completely out the umbilical cord should break on its own. Make sure the kid is breathing by cleaning the mouth and nose. In cold weather dry off the ears and tail of the kid as thoroughly as possible to avoid freezing. Let the doe lick the kid; this helps in bonding. Pour or spray antiseptic (tincture of Iodine) on kids’ navel to protect from infection. After the birth, check the teats of the mother to see if they are open and she has milk. It is important kids drink the first milk (colostrum) to gain immunity. Ensure enough consumption of colostrum in first 12 hrs of life: 10-20% of its body weight within 3-12 hours after birth (Pugh) If the mother does not have enough, use colostrum from another doe.

## Vaccination and Weaning

Colostrum from a vaccinated mother in the last trimester of pregnancy will protect the kids from pulpy kidney (enterotoxaemia) and tetanus for the first few weeks. The first shot of vaccine for 7 way or 8 way should be given at 6 weeks of age. The next shot is due at 6 months and then annually.

It is advisable to keep the kidding period as small as four weeks to reduce the labour and record keeping for vaccination. This would also give similar growth rates in all the kids at the time of weaning. The weaning age should be between 3-4 months depending market plans and desired weight gains.

## kidding Supplies

- Propylene glycol or molasses (for treating pregnancy toxemia)
- Calcium borogluconate (for treating milk fever)
- 50% dextrose and antibiotics
- Thermometer, syringes and needles
- Bearing retainer (spoon) or prolapse harness
- Rubber gloves, protective sleeves, or latex gloves
- OB lubrication & OB S-curve needle
- Nylon rope, snare, or leg puller
- Towels and rags
- Heat lamp or warming box
- Gentle iodine (or other disinfectant)
- Frozen colostrum (ewe, doe, or cow)
- Lamb/kid feeding tube
- Lamb/kid milk replacer
- Nipples
- Scale and sling
- Ear tags\*

\*Many breeders use tags to identify animals. A mandatory, national identification system is currently being developed and is expected to be in place in 2009.

## Resources

Kidding Management – Dr. Elke Scheurmann, University of Melbourne, Australia.  
Goat Medicine (1994) – Mary C. Smith DVM & David M Sherman DVM MS.  
The Process of Kidding – Melanie Barkley, Extension Agent, Barkley County, USA