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Lambing Time Management Tips
Dr. Scott Greiner, Extension Animal Scientist, Sheep, VA Tech

Breeding to 6 Weeks Before Lambing

1. Mature ewes in average to good body condition should be fed to maintain or slightly increase their bodyweight during the first 3.5 months of gestation. This is the time to take advantage of poor quality pasture or crop residue. If this period occurs during the winter, hay will normally supply the necessary nutrients, with no supplemental grain required.

2. Thin ewes should be fed separately and supplemented with 1 to 1.5 lbs of grain per day to gain 10 to 15 lbs by 6 weeks before lambing.

3. Pregnant ewe lambs should be fed separately from mature ewes. They should gain approximately 25 lbs from breeding to 6 weeks before lambing. Attempts to cause large weight gains in ewe lambs during late gestation may lead to lambing problems.

4. If pregnant ewes are to be brought into the flock, keep these ewes separate from the main flock through lambing when feasible. This will diminish the risk of introducing abortion and other diseases into the main flock. Consult with your veterinarian regarding health management protocols for these newly received ewes.

5. Shear ewes if facilities are available to shelter ewes appropriately during winter months.

6 Weeks Before Lambing

1. Start feeding 0.5 lb of grain per head daily as a preventative for pregnancy disease. Grain may be in the form of whole shelled corn or barley. Even if

ewes are on good quality pasture, they still require the extra grain. During the winter or when on poor quality pasture, feed approximately 4 lbs of hay in addition to grain.

2. Supplementation of tetracycline pre-lambing has been shown to reduce the incidence of abortions. Consult with your veterinarian on a flock health management protocol.

3. Make sure there is plenty of feed trough space so that ewes do not crowd each other at feeding time.

4. Check and avoid ditches, sills, narrow gates, or any other objects that would cause ewes to jump, crowd, squeeze, or climb before lambing.

4 Weeks Before Lambing

1. Shear the wool from around the head, udder and dock of pregnant ewes. If covered facilities are available, shear the ewes completely. Sheared ewes are more apt to lamb inside, the inside of the barn stays drier because less moisture is carried in by the ewes, more ewes can be kept inside, and it creates a cleaner environment for the lambs and the shepherd. Sheared ewes must have access to a barn during cold, freezing rains, and they must receive additional feed during periods of extremely cold temperatures.

2. Vaccinate ewes for overeating disease and tetanus. These vaccines provide passive immunity to baby lambs through the ewes’ colostrum until they can be vaccinated at 4 to 6 weeks of age.

3. Check and separate pregnant ewes and remove open ewes that are not part of the main flock.

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all ewes that are developing udders or showing signs of lambing. Check and remove heavy ewes once a week during the lambing season. Increase the grain on all ewes showing signs of lambing to 1 lb daily, and feed all the good quality grass/legume hay they will clean up.
4. Observe ewes closely. Ewes that are sluggish or hang back at feeding may be showing early signs of pregnancy disease.
5. Shelter ewes from bad weather.
6. Get lambing pens and lambing equipment ready. There should be one lambing pen for every ten ewes expected to lamb.
7. Stock lambing supplies such as iodine, antibiotics, stomach tube, injectable selenium/Vitamin E, OB lube, lamb puller, ear tags, etc.

At Lambing Time
1. Check ewes on a frequent basis (every 3 to 4 hours), as feasible. Do not check ewes in the middle of the night. Activity at that time may stimulate ewes to lamb two to three hours before they normally would.
2. Assist ewes which have been in labor more than one hour and not yet delivered lambs.
3. After lambs are born, move the ewe and her lambs to a lambing pen with a minimum dimension of 5’ x 5’. Check the ewe’s udder to see that she has milk, strip each teat to remove the waxy plug, and make sure lambs nurse within 30 minutes.
4. Colostrum is critical for baby lamb survival. For ewes without milk or for lambs that fail to nurse, lambs must be given colostrum via a stomach tube. If sheep colostrum is not available, cow or goat colostrum should be used. Colostrum can be frozen in ice cube trays or stored in plastic storage bags. Colostrum should be thawed using indirect heat. Thawing by direct heat destroys the antibodies that are present. Lambs should receive 20 ml (cc) of colostrum per pound of body weight. It works best if feedings can be 4 hours apart.
5. Only use a heat lamp if lambs are weak and chilled. Avoid danger of fire by hanging heat lamps 3’ above the bedding and in the corner of the lambing pen. Block off the corner so that the ewe cannot get under the lamp.
6. Check on the health of the ewe and her lambs at least three times daily. Lambs that are lying down should be made to get up. Those that fail to stretch after getting up may have a problem that requires further examination. The biggest cause of baby lamb mortality is starvation.
7. North Carolina is a selenium deficient state. If selenium deficiency has been a problem, lambs should be given an injection of 0.25 mg selenium per 10lb body weight immediately after birth. A good quality mineral provided to the ewe flock on a year-round basis has been shown to be the best way to prevent selenium deficiency.
8. A general rule of thumb is for the ewe and her lambs to stay in the lambing pen one day for each lamb.

Weak or small lambs may require a longer stay.
9. Ewes should receive fresh water and high quality hay the day of lambing. Don’t feed grain until the second day. One pound of grain plus 5 lbs of good quality hay will take care of their needs until moving to a mixing pen.
10. If ewes were not treated for internal parasites within 3 weeks of lambing, they should be treated prior to removal from the lambing pen.
11. Keep records on all ewes, noting those that had problems. Individually identify lambs so they can be matched with the ewe. The ability to match ewes and lambs is important to monitor performance, and individual identification is critical for making selection and culling decisions.
12. Move ewes and their lambs from lambing pens to mixing pens. Make sure lambs are matched up well with their mothers before moving to larger groups. Ewes with twins should be receiving 2 lbs of a 15% crude protein grain mix and 5 lbs of good quality hay daily. Ewes with singles should be receiving 1 lb of a 15% crude protein grain mix and 5 lbs of good quality hay daily.
13. All lambs should be docked and castrated by the time they are 2 weeks old.
14. Lambs on a winter-lambing program should have access to a high-quality creep feed by the time they are 7 days old. Creep feed should contain 18% to 20% crude protein and be low in fiber. Make sure the source of protein in commercially prepared lamb creep pellets is all natural protein and does not contain urea. Maintain at least a 2:1 calcium to phosphorous ratio in the feed by adding 1% feed grade limestone. Calcium to phosphorus ratios of less than 2:1 may lead to urinary calculi. When constructing a creep area, keep the following points in mind: 1) place the creep in a convenient location close to an area where the ewe flock congregates; 2) have openings on at least two sides of the creep and several openings per side; 3) keep the creep area clean and well bedded; 4) place a light over the creep to help attract lambs. Sunlight shining into the creep area works well; 5) keep feed fresh and provide clean water in the creep; and 6) construct the creep feeder so that lambs cannot stand and play in it. Allow 2” of trough space per lamb.

Post-Lambing
1. Vaccinate lambs for overeating disease at 4 weeks of age. Booster the lambs for overeating disease one week before weaning.
2. Wean winter born lambs at 2 to 3 months of age and spring-born lambs at 3 to 5 months of age. Weaning age will vary depending on the marketing plan for the lambs. Generally, winter-born lambs should be weaned at an earlier age and managed to grow rapidly and be sold in the spring at a young age. Spring-born lambs should be weaned at an older age, derive a large percentage of their growth from...
Herd Management Calendar for North Carolina Producers

As meat goat production becomes an increasingly important part of North Carolina’s livestock industry, producers are using a comprehensive plan to help ensure profitability. The recommendations in this publication will help you plan and time the major herd activities that are crucial to the profitability of your enterprise.

This calendar was developed for spring kidding. If you want a fall kidding herd, you will need to adjust the breeding season management, the feeding of does and bucks before breeding, and the marketing plan. Whether you have a spring or a fall kidding herd, do not let the length of the breeding and kidding season exceed 60 days. This calendar presents longer periods for different environmental and marketing concerns.

In addition to the tasks listed in the calendar, do the following each time the goats are worked.

- Check the color of the mucus membrane around the eye to determine if goats should be treated for internal parasites. If more than 10% of the herd requires treatment, treat the entire herd.
- After treating for parasites, move the herd to a fresh pasture that has not had goats in it for at least 4 weeks.
- Check hooves monthly, and trim overgrown hooves. Check for hoof rot.
- Record all goats that continually require treatment for internal parasites and hoof problems. Cull goats with continuing problems.

Recommended practices for meat goat production include:

- Vaccinating for CI. Chauvoei, septicum, novyi type B, haemolyticum, tetani, and perfringens types C & D.
- Treating for internal parasites as needed. Use one parasite product until it no longer works, and then move to another class.
- Use rotational or controlled grazing management to reduce exposure to parasites and improve forage utilization.
- Use sound grazing management practices, including separating the mineral feeder from the water source.
- Allow animals with the highest nutrient demands to graze pasture first.
- If woodland areas are available, manage them as a resource. Do not use goats to clean them for pastures if you plan to remain in goat production.

Forage and therefore grow at a slower rate, and be marketed in the late fall and winter at an older age compared to winter-born lambs.

3. For ewes weaned at 2 to 3 months of lactation, supplemental grain should be discontinued and forage quality decreased one week prior to weaning. Fasting ewes for 72 hours without feed and water at weaning has been used successfully to prevent mastitis. During periods of high temperatures, make sure ewes have access to shade.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Breeding Management</th>
<th>Feeding Management</th>
<th>Health Management</th>
<th>Marketing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>• Castrate males within one week of birth. • Ear tag kids as they are born and identify with doe. • Cull does that did not produce live kids. • Separate does that have kidded from dry does.</td>
<td>• Feed hay stored outside first. • Continue grazing stockpiled cool-season forages.</td>
<td>• Vaccinate does 2 to 6 weeks before kidding.</td>
<td>• Sell cull does.</td>
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<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>• Castrate males within one week of birth. • Ear tag kids as they are born and identify with doe. • Cull does that did not produce live kids. • Separate does that have kidded from dry does.</td>
<td>• Provide a high quality diet to does that have kidded.</td>
<td>• Vaccinate does 2 to 6 weeks before kidding.</td>
<td>• Sell cull does.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>• Castrate males within one week of birth. • Ear tag kids as they are born and identify with doe. • Cull does that did not produce live kids. • Separate does that have kidded from dry does.</td>
<td>• Provide a high quality diet to does that have kidded. • Begin grazing cool-season forages.</td>
<td>• Vaccinate does 2 to 6 weeks before kidding. • Begin checking for parasite loads.</td>
<td>• Sell cull does.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>• Castrate males within one week of birth. • Ear tag kids as they are born and identify with doe. • Cull does that did not produce live kids. • Separate does that have kidded from dry does. • Treat for coccidia four weeks before weaning.</td>
<td>• Provide a high quality diet to does that have kidded. • Begin grazing cool-season forages.</td>
<td>• Vaccinate kids at 10 to 12 weeks of age. • Check for parasite load.</td>
<td>• Sell cull does.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>• Treat for coccidia four weeks before weaning. • Wean kids. • Cull low-producing does. • Identify and separate replacement does.</td>
<td>• Begin grazing warm-season forages. • Continue grazing cool-season forages. • Allow weaned kids first access to pastures.</td>
<td>• Vaccinate kids at 10 to 12 weeks of age. Give a booster at 16 to 18 weeks of age. • Check for parasite load.</td>
<td>• Sell cull does.</td>
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<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>• Treat for coccidia four weeks before weaning. • Wean kids. • Cull low-producing does. • Identify and separate replacement does.</td>
<td>• Begin grazing summer annual forages. • Continue grazing cool-season forages. • Allow weaned kids first access to pastures.</td>
<td>• Vaccinate kids at 10 to 12 weeks of age. Give a booster at 16 to 18 weeks of age. • Check for parasite load.</td>
<td>• Sell cull does. • Purchase replacement bucks.</td>
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Meat Goat Vaccination Program
Jean-Marie Luginbuhl

Should I vaccinate my goats?
Although some producers have had no problems so far without implementing a vaccination program, it is recommended that you vaccinate your goats.

What should I vaccinate my goats against?
1. Overeating Disease (Enterotoxemia) and Tetanus

What vaccine should I use?
1. Clostridium Perfringens Types C and D + Tetanus Toxoid in one vaccine, against overeating disease and tetanus. This vaccine is labeled for goats.
2. Multivalent clostridial vaccine (8-way vaccine)
   One example of a multiway clostridial vaccine, labeled for sheep, is Covexin8. Covexin8 is more reactive and may cause a higher incidence of adverse reaction at the injection site.
   Covexin8 may preferably be used in herds which have had problems with blackleg and malignant edema (gas gangrene). Although blackleg and malignant edema are common and costly infections in sheep and cattle, they are very uncommon in goats.

What dosage should I use when should I vaccinate my goats?
Always read the instructions provided with the vaccine.
1. Clostridium perfringens Types C and D + Tetanus
   Dosage (Bar-Vac CD/T; Fermicon CD/T)
   - 2 mL per animal, regardless of age and weight
   When
   Bucks. Once a year
   Breeding females. Once a year: 4 to 6 weeks before kidding (some immunity is passed on to the kids), or twice a year: 4 to 6 weeks before kidding and 6 months later (4 to 6 weeks before breeding if breeding does once a year).
   Kids. If breeding females have been vaccinated before kidding, vaccinate kids at week 8 of age, then give a booster at week 12 of age.
   If breeding females have not been vaccinated before kidding and you experience problems, vaccinate kids at 2 weeks of age, then give a booster at 6 weeks of age.
2. Multivalent clostridial vaccine
   Dosage (Covexin8)
   - 5 mL per animal, regardless of age and weight. Kids get 5 mL initially, then a 2 mL booster 6 weeks later.
   When
   Bucks. Once a year
   Breeding females. Once a year: 2 to 6 weeks before kidding (some immunity is passed on to the kids).
   Kids. If breeding females have been vaccinated before kidding, vaccinate kids at week 10-12 of age, then give a booster at week 16-18 of age.
   If breeding females have not been vaccinated before kidding and you experience problems, vaccinate kids at 4 weeks of age, then give a booster at 10 weeks of age.

How should I give the injections and where?
Both Clostridium perfringens Types C D /Tetanus and multivalent clostridial vaccines are given in subcutaneous or intramuscular injections. Sub-cutaneous injections are favored because of the greater tissue damage at the injection site from intramuscular injections.
For sub-cutaneous injections, pinch loose skin between thumb and index finger high on the neck (close to the head as possible) and insert the needle. Make sure that the needle is under the skin and does not stick out on the other of the pinched skin.

Is there a slaughter withdrawal time?
Yes, there is a 21 day waiting period between vaccination and slaughter for both vaccines.

Should I vaccinate my goats against tetanus before castration and/or disbudding?
If you have not implemented a vaccination program in your herd, it is advisable to vaccinate your goats against tetanus before disbudding and castration, whether using banding, cutting or using a burdizzo.
Tetanus Toxoid vaccines are available.

Should I give a Tetanus Toxoid booster to my goat if a severe wound occurs?
Yes.
Give a subcutaneous injection of Tetanus Toxoid for long term protection (one year).
Tetanus antitoxin can also be given to protect goats when a wound occurs, but this only protects for approximately 30 days.
Meat Goat Vaccination Program

Are there other vaccines on the market?

Yes, many other vaccines are available, including those for leptospirosis, chlamydiosis, sore mouth, blue-tongue, footrot, etc. However, those should be used to control existing problems upon veterinary recommendations - often only after management changes have failed.

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