



Kidding Time

Kidding time is one of the most rewarding times with goats. Most of the year, the goats are tended with regular routines of care and feeding. When kidding time comes, there is excitement at the prospect of seeing the new kid crop, along with some apprehension about the deliveries.

Well before it is time for your does to kid, it is best to prepare supplies needed at kidding time. It is a good idea to keep a "kidding kit" in the barn, so that instead of madly searching for an item during the excitement of birth, every thing is readily accessible! A large plastic tool box is handy and is easy to move from pen to pen.

You will need:

- Something absorbent for drying the kids – old towels or newspapers
- Disposable gloves – both the long full arm type and the regular short ones to use when you need to examine a doe.
- Lubricant – if you need to examine or assist the doe, you will need to lubricate your hand, whether gloved or not. KY Jelly, petroleum jelly, or a soapy lather will all work.
- Iodine – for dipping the kids' navels immediately after birth. Some breeders dip the hooves of newborns as well. Check with your veterinarian for the appropriate strength.
- Selenium – a trace mineral needed by all animals. Most regions of Canada and the US are selenium deficient. It is regular practice by



many goat breeders to administer selenium to newborn kids to prevent White Muscle Disease. Selenium comes mixed with Vitamin E and is injected subcutaneously (under the skin). A very fine needle, such as a 26 gauge insulin needle works well for newborns. Dosages vary with the strength of the product; check with your veterinarian.

- Vitamins A&D – many goat breeders routinely administer Vitamins A&D at birth by injection or orally.
- Extra colostrum – sometimes, for one reason or another, a doe will not have enough colostrum for her kids, and sometimes none at all. It is crucial that all kids receive colostrum for the first 12-24 hours of life. Without this, the survival rate is very low. Colostrum provides the antibodies necessary for survival and produces a laxative effect to the bowels moving. Extra colostrum can be frozen in freezer bags (8oz each). To thaw, let bag sit in a pan of warm water.
- Thread – to tie off umbilical cords that are bleeding excessively.
- Scales – for weighing the kids at birth and as they grow. Dairy scales work well. A sling or bucket can hold the kid for weighing.

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- Identification – some kind of temporary identification is needed until you tattoo the kids. Hospital-style ID bracelets work well, or use your imagination.

Kid area – if you are going to hand-raise the kids you need a clean, warm, dry place to put them. CAE prevention programs, practiced by some breeders, demand that kids be removed immediately from the dam and raised on pasteurized milk or milk replacer.

Fortunately most goats kid without problems; though this is not to say that you can just leave the does to do it on their own! First time kidders may need more observation and intervention than more experienced goats, but all of your pregnant does should be monitored.

After having said that most goats kid without problems, there are times when the doe will need some assistance with kidding. The best recommendation is to have an experienced goat breeder or veterinarian on hand for the first few kiddings. You can read a hundred articles on what to do in the event of problems but in the heat of the moment there is nothing as reassuring as having an experienced person present. Assisting someone else with a kidding problem is an excellent way to obtain experience without having to make the decisions!

Hopefully, you will have recorded the date of breeding, so that you are not guessing at the delivery date. The gestation of a goat is 146 to 154 days, with 150 days being average. Well before kidding, prepare a kidding area and have all necessary supplies and equipment on hand. Well-organized breeders have an area set up with kidding pens. Goats are able to kid successfully in the pasture or main barn, but the chances of something going wrong is increased.

Goats, like most animals, like to have somewhere quiet, clean and private to have their kids in. Some farmers have a separate barn just for kidding, while others convert part

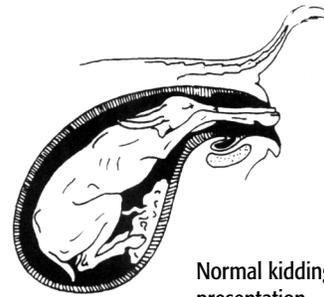
of their main barn into a kidding area. Moveable kidding pens may be used; 6'x8' is a good size.

Each kidding pen should have a small

hay and grain feeder and access to water. Does will be in these pens for a few days during the kidding period. One of the greatest advantages of having small individual pens for the does to kid in is that you can quickly clean and sterilize the pen and prepare it for the next doe.

One to two weeks before the doe is due to kid, you should notice changes in her. The doe's udder should be filling out, the tendons that run alongside the tailbone will soften, the vulva will enlarge and soften and you will sometimes be able to see the movement of the kids in the womb. Two to four days before the doe is due to kid, you may observe mucous coming from the vagina. The doe will be restless and will start pawing the ground, trying to make a nest. Her udder should be full.

Once she starts making a nest, you should move the doe to the kidding area, into one of the kidding pens. This will give her a chance to check out her new surroundings and create a new nest. The pen should be well-bedded with dry straw. Wood shavings can also be used. Cleanliness is essential. The doe will continue to be restless, and will soon start to have contractions. As a general rule, once contractions start, it will not be long before the doe delivers. A doe can have her kids while standing or lying down. At this point, you should be quietly observing. The doe will know what to do, and left quietly, will get down to the job at hand. First the water bag will appear and break, releasing the fluid. The front feet and the nose will follow in a normal



Normal kidding presentation.

presentation. When the rear feet come first, it is called a breech birth. The doe is capable of delivering her kids either way. The best advice is to leave the doe alone and let her do her job. If she continues to strain and push without results for over an hour, it is time to help. If you are inexperienced, call another goat breeder or your vet for assistance.

Using a surgical glove and lubricant you may "go in" with a few fingers or a small hand and check the progress. If two feet are showing, feel further to identify either a head or a tail. Your fingers are your eyes, so try to picture in your mind what you are feeling. If you are going to pull the kid, the pull should coincide with the doe's straining movements.

Make sure you have a firm grip on the legs and pull, slightly downward, each time the doe strains. Should you be confused about what is presented, then do not just pull regardless, as you may be pulling one leg of one kid and one leg of another kid.

Once the kid is out, either remove it from the immediate area if you are planning to hand-raise, or move the kid up to the doe's head so that she can clean it. Remove any mucous from the nose and mouth of the kid and make sure it is breathing. Check to make sure there is not excessive bleeding from the umbilical cord, which should be torn gently

several inches from the kid's belly if it did not tear off during delivery. Tie the cord off with thread if it is bleeding excessively. Dip the umbilical cord in iodine. This is best accomplished by pouring a small amount in a small container such as an empty film canister and tipping the container right up towards the belly while the cord is in the iodine.

If the doe is going to have more than one kid, the next one should follow quite quickly, usually within 10-15 minutes. After kidding, the doe appreciates a drink of warm water with just a little molasses in it.

Most goats are good mothers and will look after their kids without assistance. Check to make sure that the waxy plug is removed from the end of each teat and that the milk is flowing, so that the kids can suckle. It is very important that newborn kids receive colostrum within the first hour of life. If for any reason the kid is not able to suckle the doe, bottle feed the kid a few ounces of colostrum, then return it to its mother.

With goats, most births are easy and successful. There may be problems that arise on occasion, but with luck, your vet or an experienced goat breeder will be there to help out when problems occur. It is best to observe a few births before you take on the challenge single-handed.



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