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## **Preparing for Kidding Season**

It's a new year and kidding season is right around the corner, or for some breeders it may have already began. If kidding has not already started for you, now is a good time to go through your supplies to make sure you have everything you may need and are ready for kidding season. Preparing for kidding season can vary a little bit depending on herd size. However, there are basic supplies that should be kept on hand no matter the herd size or the type of goats being raised. A few of the basic supplies that should be kept on hand include: clean towels, bulb syringe, OB sleeves and/or exam gloves, OB lube, iodine, colostrum, bottles and nipples for bottle feeding, esophageal feeding tube and 60cc syringe, heat lamps, thermometer, scale, and record sheets or book.

During kidding season, it is almost guaranteed that there will be a doe that needs assistance, or you will be handling a kid shortly after they are born. When assisting a doe during kidding it is handy to have towels nearby for cleaning off the kid's face to make sure their nose and mouth are clear and they are able to breathe and to dry kids off if needed. Another handy tool to have is a bulb syringe. These work great for clearing the kid's airways of any birthing fluid they may have inhaled. While we always hope that we won't have to pull any kids, it is important to have exam gloves, OB sleeves and lubricant on hand in case you do need to pull a kid. A kid puller or leg snare can also be helpful when pulling kids. One of the most important supplies to have on hand is seven percent iodine. It is important to dip the umbilical cord of the kid in iodine right after birth to prevent infection and reduce the chance of naval ill. Naval ill is caused by bacteria entering the kid's body through the umbilical cord and causing infection. Dental floss is also handy to have on hand to use to tie off an umbilical cord if necessary, and scissor to cut off any excess umbilical cord after the umbilical cord has been tied off.

Frozen colostrum or colostrum replacer is very important to have in case a doe does not have enough colostrum to feed her kids, there is a weak or orphaned kid that needs to be bottle fed. Colostrum is the first milk does produce; it is thick and yellowish in color. Colostrum is nutrient rich and most importantly contains maternal antibodies (immunoglobulins). When born kids do not have any antibodies to protect them from disease, but the antibodies kids absorb from colostrum help develop their immune system and protect them against disease. If kids do not get

colostrum their chance of survival is very low. It is very important to make sure kids receive colostrum right after they are born, the antibodies found in colostrum are large proteins and when born, the kid's small intestines have openings to absorb these proteins. However, kids can only absorb these antibodies within the first 24-36 hours after they are born and they absorb them best within the first few hours after birth.

After 24 hours the kid's ability to absorb the antibodies in colostrum is very minimal. This is why colostrum is one of the most important supplies to have. Kids should consume at least 10 percent of their body weight in colostrum. While colostrum from the kid's dam is the most ideal source, frozen or fresh colostrum from a doe in your herd is the next best option, but colostrum replacer will work as well. If using colostrum replacer, make sure to follow the mixing and storing instructions on the package. If you are using colostrum from a doe that you do not know the history of or a doe that has tested positive for CAE the colostrum should be heat treated before feeding to kids to prevent disease. It is important to remember that colostrum should not be warmed up in the microwave because the high temperature will kill the antibodies in the colostrum. Bottles and nipples should be kept on hand for any kids that need to be bottle fed as well as an esophageal feeding tube and 60cc syringe for kids that are too weak to nurse or are reluctant to nurse and need to be tube fed. However, tube feeding kids that have a subnormal body temperature (a goat's normal body temperature is 101-103°F) is not recommended. If you put your finger inside the kid's mouth and it feels cold the kid must be warmed up before it is fed. A thermometer should be kept on hand at all times to check the temperature of any goat that shows signs of sickness, and can be used to monitor the temperature of kids while you are warming them up. Heating pad, heat lamps, and kid coats are also good to have on hand to help keep kids warm during extremely cold days or for kids that need to be warmed up.

Another important supply to have on hand that may not be traditionally considered a "supply" is a record sheet or book and scale to weigh kids. While kidding is a very busy time and it can be easy to overlook record keeping, just keeping simple records of birth weights, number of kids born to each doe, and if the doe needed to be assisted during kidding can be helpful when making management decisions later in the year. Ear tags or another form of identification may also be useful to identify kids and help with record keeping. Of course there are many other supplies that can be added to this list, such as medications, that are most likely already kept on hand in case they are needed throughout the year. In addition to supplies, having the phone number of a vet and/or a more experienced goat breeder written down or saved in your phone is always good to have in case you have questions or need help pulling a kid.

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