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Preparing for Lambing & Kidding

Kidding and lambing season is right around the corner, or may have already started for some. Before lambing & kidding start, it is essential to check your supplies to ensure you have everything needed. A few of the basic supplies that I like to keep on hand include clean towels, a bulb syringe, OB sleeves and/or exam gloves, OB lube, iodine, colostrum, bottles and nipples for bottle feeding, an esophageal feeding tube, a 60cc syringe, a heat lamp, and a thermometer.

When assisting a doe/ewe, it is handy to have towels nearby for cleaning off the kid's/lamb's face to make sure their nose and mouth are clear, and they are able to breathe, and to dry kids/lambs off if needed. Another handy tool to have is a bulb syringe; these work great for clearing the airways of any birthing fluid they may have inhaled. And while we hope that we won't have to pull any kids/lambs, it is best to have exam gloves/OB sleeves, and lube on hand in case you do need to pull one.

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/lamb in iodine right after birth to prevent infection and reduce the chance of navel ill. Navel ill is caused by bacteria entering the body through the umbilical cord and causing infection. Dental floss is also handy to have to tie off an umbilical cord if necessary, and scissors to cut off any excess umbilical cord after it has been tied off.

Frozen colostrum or a colostrum replacer is another essential supply to have. Colostrum is the first milk that mothers produce; it is nutrient-rich and, most importantly, contains maternal antibodies (immunoglobulins). When born, kids/lambs do not have any antibodies to protect them from disease, but the antibodies absorbed from colostrum help develop their immune system and protect against disease. If kids/lambs do not receive colostrum, their chance of survival is very low. It is crucial to ensure that colostrum is received right away, as newborns can only absorb these antibodies within the first 24-36 hours after birth, and they are most effectively absorbed within the first few hours.

If using a colostrum replacer, follow the mixing and storage instructions on the package carefully. It is essential to remember that colostrum should not be warmed in the microwave, as high temperatures can destroy the antibodies it contains. Bottles and nipples should be kept on hand for any kids/lambs that need to be bottle-fed, as well as an esophageal feeding tube and 60cc syringe for kids/lambs that need to be tube-fed. However, tube feeding kids/lambs who have a subnormal body temperature (normal body temperature is 101-103°F) is not recommended. If you put your finger inside their mouth and it feels cold, they must be warmed

up before being fed. A thermometer should be kept on hand at all times to check the temperature of any goat/sheep that shows signs of sickness, and can also be used to monitor the temperature of kids/lambs while they are being warmed up. Heating pad, heat lamps, and kid/lamb coats are also good to have on hand for kids/lambs that need to be warmed up.

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 veterinarian and/or a more experienced breeder is always a good precaution in case you have questions or need help.

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