

## Management practices of lambs and kids

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### Introduction

It is crucial to provide utmost care to young lambs and kids during their early stages of life. Making diligent efforts to ensure their optimal growth during this period is essential. This approach guarantees improved survival rates and sets the foundation for future growth. Implementing effective management practices for lambs and kids is directly linked to reducing mortality rates, which ultimately benefits farmers. Neglecting proper healthcare and management for these young animals leads to a decline in farm size due to elevated mortality rates, hindering the economic viability that farmers seek.

### Late gestation management

Managing pregnant does or ewes during late gestation is crucial for preventing potential challenges during or shortly after birth. Ensuring proper nutrition in the last trimester can significantly enhance the health and viability of newborn lambs or kids. Insufficient feeding of pregnant does and ewes during this time can lead to negative impacts on newborns, such as reduced placental size, fetal growth, accumulation of fetal fat reserves, and maternal udder development. In the final month before parturition, fetal growth accelerates by 60-80%, underscoring the importance of adequate energy intake. Inadequate nutrition can result in pregnancy toxemia in does. Therefore, it is advisable to allow animals access to high-quality pasture for 4-5 hours daily during this period. Alongside grazing, it's essential to supplement their diet with a concentrated mixture at a rate of 250-350 g per animal per day.

During the later stages of pregnancy, it's advisable to administer vaccinations for certain diseases. This helps in depositing specific antibodies in the colostrum, which in turn benefits and safeguards the newborn lamb or kid while its immune system is still developing. One such disease is enterotoxaemia, also known as pulpy kidney disease, which is caused by a bacteria called *Clostridium*

perfringens type D. The vaccine should be given 2-4 weeks prior to the animal giving birth. When this practice is combined with proper colostrum and feeding management, it aids in preventing the occurrence of this disease.

### **Feeding of lambs/kids**

#### **Colostrum feeding:**

Similar to other species, colostrum is essential for newborn lambs and kids. Kids and lambs rely on the absorption of immunoglobulins from colostrum from the dam to protect them against disease early in their lives while their own immune systems are still developing. Colostrum also contains high levels of energy (in the form of fat and glucose) that can help prevent hypothermia/hypoglycemia very early in life. To ensure an ample amount of colostrum intake for meat lambs and kids, monitor the udder of the dam, a slack udder will indicate colostrum consumption. If unsure, or if lambs or kids are slow or weak, hand feed the colostrum using a bottle. For lambs and kids raised from dairy ewes/does, hand feeding colostrum is necessary. Ensure that 50 mL/kg of colostrum is consumed soon after birth (ideally within the first hour of life) and 200 mL/kg is consumed across three feedings within the first 24 hours of life. Feeding this quantity of colostrum will help to protect against disease and provide additional calories to stay warm, especially in the winter.

#### **Creep feeding:**

Creep feeding serves the primary goal of providing additional nutrients to facilitate swift growth in young animals. This practice typically commences when the animals reach the age of one month and continues until they are 2 to 3 months old. The recommended amount of creep feed for each juvenile is around 50 to 100 grams per day. This feed should consist of 22 percent protein content. Creep shed should also include mineral mixture, salt and vitamins like A, B2, D3. Optionally, antibiotics such as oxytetracycline or chlortetracycline can be incorporated into the feed at a rate of 15 to 25 mg per kilogram of feed.

#### **Weaning**

Proper management of weaners holds a crucial role in effective sheep/goat husbandry. The following steps are essential for the adequate care and handling of weaners. It's advisable to conduct weaning at 90 days of age, although in cases of breeds with limited milk production or when aiming for re-breeding, it can be performed around 60 days. It's vital to offer supplementary feeding and ensure access to quality pasture for growing weaners. After weaning, lambs/kids should receive deworming treatment against gastrointestinal parasites within the first month. Additionally, vaccination against enterotoxaemia and sheep pox is recommended. It's important to avoid grazing weaners on pastures with poor, thorny vegetation, as this can lead to skin irritation, eye injuries, and harm to their wool. Protecting them from harsh weather conditions and potential predation is also crucial.



## Housing

Lambs or kids, from the point of weaning until they reach maturity, are housed within these sheds at a capacity of around 25 animals per shed. By creating appropriate divisions within a larger shed, lambs can be segregated based on their age and development stage: unweaned, weaned but not fully mature, and those nearing maturity. Alternatively, on larger farms, three distinct sheds can be constructed to accommodate these three categories of lambs or kids. Each individual shed would measure 7.5 meters in length, 4 meters in width, and 3 meters in height, allowing for a maximum capacity of 75 animals. These sheds would be partitioned horizontally, forming two compartments. One compartment, sized at 5 meters in length, 4 meters in width, and 3 meters in height, would serve as the space for unweaned animals. The other compartment, measuring 2.5 meters in length, 4 meters in width, and 3 meters in height, would be designated for housing weaned animals.

## Vaccination

Prevention of disease plays a major role in increasing profitability in a sheep or goat farm. Vaccination against infectious diseases is an important component of health management.

Tetanus	Immediately after birth
Foot and mouth disease	At the age of 4 months, repeat again once in 6 months.
Sheep pox	At the age of 3 months, repeat again once in a year.
Enterotoxaemia	First vaccination-just before the weaning. 2nd vaccination-at 6 months of age, repeat once in a year.
Peste des petits ruminants	At the age of 3 months, repeat once in a year.
Anthrax	At the age of 6 months, repeat once in a year.
Blue tongue	At the age of 3 months, repeat once in a year.

## Deworming

Kids and lambs should undergo deworming at 3 months of age. For goats, deworming should occur every 2 to 3 months, with regular changes in the deworming agents used. Dosage must correspond to the animal's weight to prevent over- or under-dosing and the subsequent development of drug resistance due to repeated administration. Utilizing a combination of dewormers for various worms is preferable to targeting specific ones. External parasites can be eliminated by allowing animals to undergo dipping treatments.



## **Castration**

Castration is a common practice in animal husbandry for various reasons. It helps in taming animals, preventing uncontrolled breeding, and reducing the risk of certain reproductive diseases. Additionally, castration can lead to faster weight gain and improved meat quality. The procedure is typically carried out on young animals aged 2-3 months through surgical means. In adult animals, castration can be done within the first year using a closed method involving a tool called the Burdizzo castrator. This device compresses the spermatic cord, halting blood flow to the testes. This results in the testes shrinking and a halt in sperm production. After castration, young animals should be given a few days of rest in clean and comfortable enclosures. The Burdizzo castrator method is considered safe and efficient, with a lower risk of infections.

## **Dehorning**

The most effective time to remove horns from lambs and kids is within the first week of their life when the buds are still forming. This method offers several benefits, including reduced likelihood of injuries, lower risk of harm to both the animals and people, and less space needed at feeding and water stations. The process involves using a heated dehorning iron, which can be powered by electricity or direct flame. The end of the iron should be round and hollow to fit over the horn bud. Another option is to apply caustic soda for horn bud removal. To carry out the procedure, the animal must be properly restrained. The heated iron rod is then positioned over the horn bud and rotated for approximately 10 seconds. Prior to using the hot iron rod, it's important to trim the surrounding hair around the bud.

## **Conclusion**

It's important to note that the specific management practices may vary depending on factors such as the breed, local climate, available resources, and the intended purpose of raising lambs and kids. Consulting with experienced farmers, veterinarians, and agricultural extension services in your area can provide valuable guidance tailored to your specific circumstances.

