

When Your Goat Is In Labor

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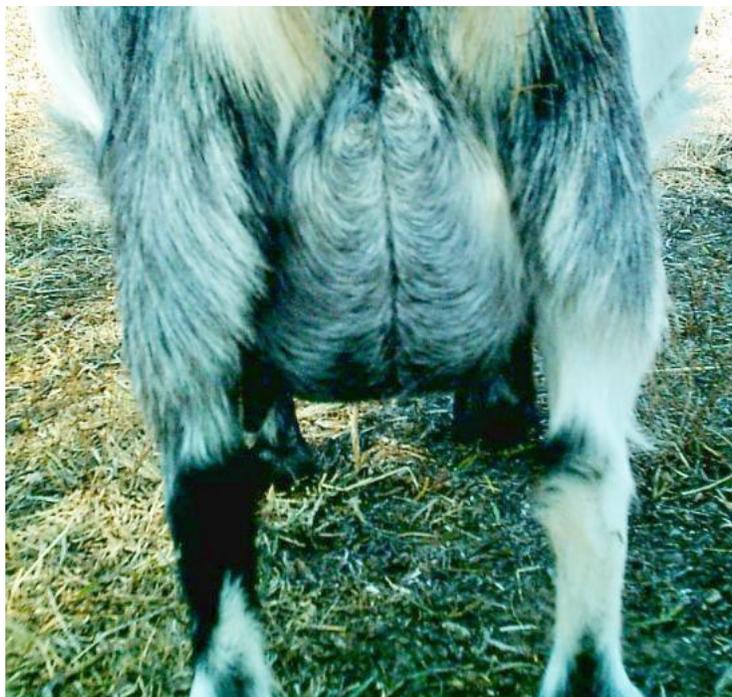
By Milk Maid

For many of us kidding season is getting close. Depending on where you live it may be later in the spring. Here in Texas, I like December kids so they are a month old now. It warms the heart to watch them come into the world and start bouncing around the barnyard. This was our 18th season and it still gives me tears of joy to watch each kid come in to the world.

For those of you that are new to goats and this is the first kidding season, please understand how this process works. For the most part everything will be fine. I'll go over how labor and birth happens so you understand what you'll see if you are with your doe while she's in labor. This is for a single kid only. Another thing, our beloved doe's never read what we write about them so this information is "in general".

If you have a breeding date for your doe, then you have a due date also. The date varies and can be from 150 to 165 days or more. After so many years of waiting on my girls to kid, it dawned on me that I was spending too many sleepless nights in the barn. I went back over my records for a few years and saw a pattern. From then on when I wrote the breeding date down, I counted forward 5 months to the date of the breeding, then 3 days back and set that as the due date. Now my girls either have their kids on the date I have or within 3 days either way. This saves me many days and nights of watching and waiting.

Each doe is different and for a first freshener it's a guessing game. If you have the due date, then start watching her 7 days before hand. You'll notice the tail is getting loose. This means the tendons on either side of it are relaxing so things can move for the head to come through the birth canal. You may have also noticed her udder is forming. This can start as much as 6 to 8 weeks before her due date. In time you'll be able to guess how many kids she will have by the size of her udder. I will be doing a separate article on the developing udder for dairy goats in a few weeks with photos. For now this little part will have to do.



This doe is a Nigerian Dwarf named Ciara. She has a nice full udder and this was her first time to kid.

When the doe is about 10 days out of her due date I start watching her udder every morning and night, really paying attention to see if there is a big change from night to morning. It won't do much and that's the point. I want to see a big change over night. Many breeders have their way of knowing when a doe will kid, mine is when I see the udder get larger over night and I think to myself, "WOW, her udder went boom over night", that's the day she will deliver. It never fails. It doesn't have to be strutted (full to the point you think it will burst). I've seen first time doe's that I was sure were going to have a single kid by the looks of the size of her udder, double over night and have twins that day.

So, you are watching your doe and she is acting odd, very talkative, wanting to lick you, or not want you around, some sound like they are humming, others chew their cud all the while and others will not eat. A real sign she is in labor is when she pees, if in labor, it will be in dribs and drabs and often, she will also hump up like a cat after peeing. Another sign is yawning a lot, depending on when you noticed her acting odd, contractions may be far apart or a few minutes apart. If you are a woman and have had a baby, it's the same concept. When you see a contraction, it will look like she is having cramps, start keeping track of the time between them. Say they are 20 minutes apart, most likely in 3 hours there will be a kid on the ground. If they are 5 minutes apart, stick around but it can still be an hour. She will walk around, paw the ground, lye down, get up, start to lye down and stop mid stream and walk away. This is all normal.

Then you see a very good contraction that makes her push. Good, this is great progress. Keep in mind that she has to be fully dilated for the kid to pass through the canal so the longer the better at this point. She may or may not lye down, most do though. When she really starts to push it will take time. Remember, she is going against gravity to push the kid up, through a small hall way and out into the world. There is no "Exit" sign in there for the kid to read.

For many doe's the first thing you'll see is a red sack. Sometimes this doesn't come first, no need to worry if it doesn't. The red sack is just fluid, the kid is not in this one. Sometimes it breaks, sometimes not. It's not an issue and if it doesn't, all the better, as the weight of it will help with the afterbirth passing so don't break it. If it does, no big deal.



On the left, Ciara is now pushing. The kids behind her are not her's but want to see what's going on.



This photo shows the water from the sack that the kid is in broke. There is a gush of fluid at this point.

The sack the kid will be in is clear with red veins running through it. When you see this one, start looking for a foot. She will get up and down several times and usually put her hind end right against the wall so you'll be thinking the kid can't get out, believe me, it will. If this sack breaks, good, more room for the kid to move around. Sometimes it won't break but at this point, it's not an issue yet. Make a note of the time when the sack breaks, the kid should be born within an hour of the sack breaking. Keep in mind what the hoof looks like, you want to see the first hoof with the pad to it facing down. This means the kid is in the correct position. It will come out and go in a few times. With each push from the

doe, it will come out a little more. Be watching for the other front hoof. Usually, it's just up a bit from the first hoof. Now, this next part will seem like forever but it's not.



The kids leg is out and the face. In this case only one hoof/leg was out while the other one was back against the kids body. This is also normal and the kid can be born without a problem. The kid is breathing. The photo on the right is rather an off thing to see but it works out fine. She is breathing air and within 3 more pushes, Bluebonnet was out.



You should be able to see the nose after both hooves are out. Sometimes not till you see the knees. If the sack is still in tact, not an issue yet. The kid will still be getting oxygen from the cord. The doe will be in much distress and may be screaming, normal, also normal if she doesn't. She will still be getting up and down. She won't sit on the kid's legs no matter what you think. Now comes the hard part.

The head has to pass through the pelvis, not an easy thing but it will. If the sac is still in tack, you can pinch it and it will break, do this down by the hooves. The fluid is thick and clear or whitish. (Sometimes it's yellow and I'll go over that in a bit) You can clear the nose and will see the kid start to breath. This is

a text book delivery but I will help anyway so it's easier for the doe. I will take one leg and bring it out straight to give more room for the kid's head; I will then do the same with the other leg. By this time the nose and face up to the eyes are out. The doe may tear and it's also not an issue, most do anyway. Would be like a woman having to be cut to have room for the head to pass.



There's nothing like the 1st glance. The bonding starts at this moment. The mom will talk to her kid and the kid will reply.

If you want to help with the head, take the legs below the knees, and pull steady, downward. By this I mean, don't be behind the doe and pull the kid straight out. Pull toward the doe's hocks (the backward knees of her hind legs). This isn't easy and if you only pull during a contraction, it helps. The kid will be out and wipe away as much of the fluid as you can. It's nice to have one of the human baby aspirator's on hand for this. You can let the kid stay attached by the umbilical cord, I do, so as much blood is transferred to the kid as possible. Mom will be looking and talking in a

soft tone, wanting to lick the kids face. Let the doe stand up when she wants to, the umbilical cord will break when she does.



The 1st bath does not only clean the kid off but helps the hair dry.

This is VERY important: if the doe does not pay any attention to the kid, get some of her grain and put it on the kid. Believe me, she won't pass up the feed and it will kick in that she has to clean the kid off. Let her eat the feed, she'll end up cleaning the kid off.

This is for a single kid:
Single kids are a bit larger than twins are because they get all the nutrients during development. This delivery will be the hardest on a doe, larger kid. ***NOTE: if the fluid in the sack that the kid is in happens to be yellow in color, break it. This yellowish color means the

kid was stressed and had a bowel movement during labor. The kid will be fine. After the doe stands up you will see the red sack hanging, LEAVE IT ALONE. This will help the afterbirth release from the walls so it can drop out. DON'T EVER pull on this as it will cause her to bleed.

There you go, you've had your first kid born, now you get to watch it try to stand up and find the faucet. As the kid nurses it will release endorphins in the doe so the afterbirth will release and fall out. Some doe's will lye down again to pass the afterbirth, some just stay standing. Some will eat it, some won't. I don't care either way; it's what a doe does. One thing you can do to help her pass the afterbirth is give her a bucket of very warm water. She's lost a lot of fluid and body heat, put some back in her. She'll love it.



Oh, the 1st meal is so warm and good.

As for nursing, that's something they will work out. First time doe's sometimes don't understand the kid has to eat, she will. I do check to make sure the kid does eat. You will know it has if you see a blackish green bowel movement from the kid. This is the first one and only happens when it's had colostrums.

I will be posting what to do if a doe has a problem delivering a kid in the next few weeks and the developing udder.

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