

Waiting Is Not an Option

By Maggie Leman

There are always hints that there is a problem. A doe who labors and pushes while standing up, gets up and down repeatedly lying down with great force like she is bouncing her belly to move kids, rubs and rubs her belly along a feeder or wall trying to positioning kids, or who pushes for more than 20 good hard pushes (count the grunts) with no bubble, no nothing, is in trouble!

Don't wait, get in there and see what is going on. It's usually a kid sideways, or kid with its head back, tangled kids, or a tail! Fix it before she pushes all those kids into a balled up mess that you can't push back to reposition. More than likely you will need to assist with any subsequent kids if you had to reposition the first.

Goats are prey animals, who, to survive, have evolved to minimize the amount of time taken to give birth and get moving. Domestication has not changed that. Kidding should be relatively fast, especially once stage 2 labor has begun. Stage 2 starts when the water breaks. The general rule of thumb is once the water breaks (doe is streaming clear mucus) the doe should produce a kid within 30 minutes. It should be no more than 30 minutes between kids. And she should pass her placenta within 2 hours. In truly uncomplicated normal goat birthings I've noticed that from water breaking to the birth of the last kid is about an hour, a bit more, maybe, when it is triplets or more. I watch for obvious placenta passing right after the "final" kid. If she doesn't have placenta starting to emerge, then there is likely another kid.

Here's some homework to do to help prepare for when you have to assist. Your fingers must be your eyes, you have to know what you are feeling. This is best practiced on a young kid, but even doing this with an adult goat will help. Close your eyes and feel with one hand. Feel what an ear is like compared to the tail. Feel the hard roundness of the head compared to the firm roundness of the butt. Feel the cleft in the hoof compared to the mouth (teeth are a dead giveaway). Feel a front knee and elbow compared to the rear hock. Feel the shoulder blades compared to the flare of the hip bones. Knowing what you are feeling is essential before you can reposition and deliver kids when your doe needs you most.