

Kidding and Nutritional Needs

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Yes, it is the time of the year when all of your hard work pays off. You find yourself busting at the seams with bouncing kids. It's time to get your disbudding iron readied as well as your elastrator. Check those rubber bands to make sure they will hold and do the job. Next month I will touch on these important kid related items. This month I would like to continue to address the needs of your all important does.

Your breeding does have produced after 5 months of their bodies having to support growing fetuses. You have paid close attention to their nutrition. Hopefully you have increased their worming schedule to keep them from losing too many nutrients to the ever present parasites. Protein played an important role in the doe's ability to conceive, carry the kids to term and to have a successful delivery. Their calorie needs had also increased. So what do we do now that the kids are out and raising havoc in the barnyard?

Your nursing does have hugely increased nutritional needs during these couple of months that the kids have free rein on their udders. It is important first and foremost that the does have access to ample clean water. No water, no milk. They will continue to produce but it will put a strain on their whole body in the process. Milk production will drop resulting in malnourished kids. It's also very important to continue to provide a high protein diet that contains lots of calories. Both the does and the kids will survive on less but you will have suboptimal gain in the growing wee ones. The doe will have to drain her already pregnancy depleted body to provide for the milk. Help her out here with 17 plus percent protein feed and good quality hay. Feed a quantity that will keep weight on her frame. To not do so can result in weakened bones, lowered immune system and impairment in her ability to conceive in the next breeding season. This is especially important in your maidens. They are still growing and need all the help they can get to reach their full potential in your breeding program.

Most of us are loving the dry weather but it has been quite cold. I make sure to bring newborns into the barn if their moms have not figured out yet that it is a good thing to do. I do little intervention other than that. If I have a maiden that seems to be a bit more clueless than the rest, I isolate her in a small pen so that she has time to figure it out. Many people utilize these bonding pens as a matter of course. It is my dream some day soon to be able to provide this for all of my does. Some use heat lamps but I don't as it can be a fire and injury hazard if not set up right. It also can cause the newborns to become dependent on them causing them to be a bit more vulnerable if the heat source becomes unavailable. Some provide creep feeders for the little ones. I think this is a great idea too. I feed out in pans and hay racks that are low to the ground so the young ones just dive in when they are ready. One other thing to think about with the cold weather is the does teats. They can develop chapped teats as the kids leave them moist. Just like your lips after a few days working out in the barn. Keep a big can of Bag Balm or such ointment to treat the teats if they should become chapped. It won't hurt the kids a

bit and the does will love you even more. Make sure that all have bedding and a windbreak. It doesn't take much to ensure success in your kidding season.

I hope this helps a bit. We are all learning together so never hesitate to email or call me with suggestion, gripes or criticisms. The learning connection is open. I wouldn't be where I am today in my own breeding program without all of you wonderful goat farmers out there!