

REPRODUCTION in ewes and does

The UTERUS (often called the womb) has a body and two horns extending from it. Each horn can contain one or more fetuses. The uterus provides a proper environment for development of embryos, then fetuses. It transports the fetus during birth. In laparoscopic artificial insemination (AI), the semen is deposited in the lumen of the uterus. Laparoscopic AI is most common in sheep.

The OVARY is the primary female organ. It produces the female reproductive cell (egg or ovum) and female reproductive hormones: estrogen and progesterone. Ewes/does will ovulate eggs every 17 or 21 days, respectively, during their natural breeding season (until they are bred).

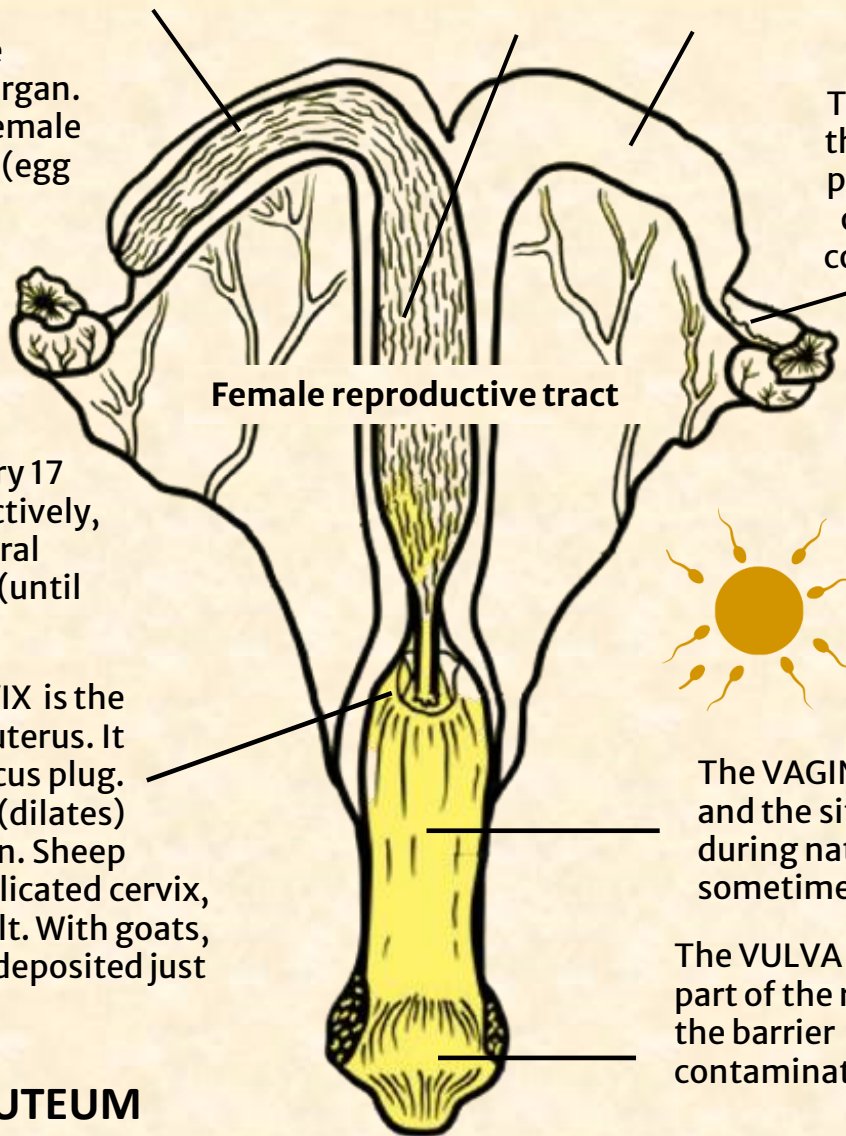
The OVIDUCT is the tube through which the ovum passes from the ovary. It opens like a "funnel" to collect the eggs. It is also involved in semen transport. Fertilization and early embryonic development occur in the oviduct.

The life span of ovulated eggs is 12-24 hours. Sperm are only viable for 12 hours, so timing is everything!

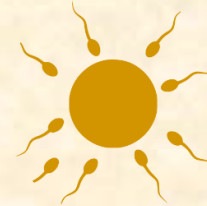
The CERVIX is the opening to the uterus. It is sealed by a mucus plug. The cervix opens (dilates) during parturition. Sheep have a very complicated cervix, making AI difficult. With goats, semen is usually deposited just inside the cervix.

The VAGINA is the organ of mating and the site of semen deposition during natural mating and sometimes artificial mating.

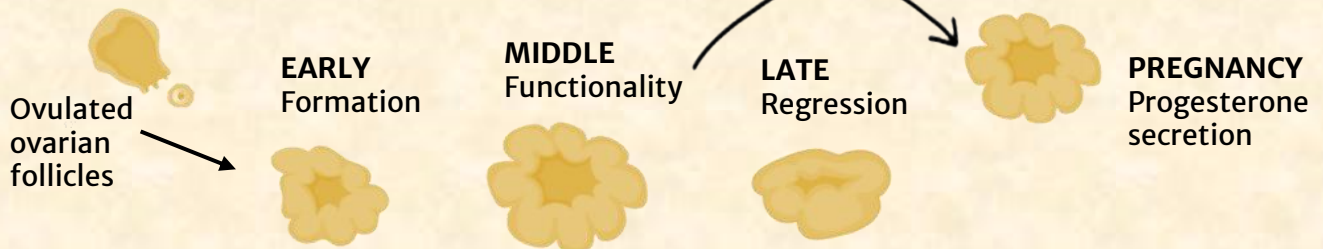
The VULVA is the external (outside) part of the reproductive tract. It is the barrier for preventing external contamination.



Female reproductive tract



CORPUS LUTEUM "YELLOW BODY"



The corpus luteum (CL) develops from an ovulatory follicle. It is a temporary structure (on the ovary) required to support and maintain pregnancy. Its main function is to produce progesterone. It prevents estrus. If pregnancy does not occur, the CL degenerates. Prostaglandin (PGF₂α) injections cause the CL to regress and are used in estrous synchronization programs. They are also used to trigger abortion or induce labor, especially in goats.