

Risk Factors associated with

# Vaginal Prolapse

A VAGINAL PROLAPSE IS WHEN THE VAGINA IS PUSHED OUTSIDE THE VULVA. IT APPEARS AS A SMOOTH, RED MASS, VARYING IN SIZE FROM A TENNIS BALL TO A MELON. IT USUALLY OCCURS IN THE MONTH PRIOR TO PARTURITION. IT IS MORE COMMON IN SHEEP THAN GOATS. THERE IS NO SINGLE CAUSE OF VAGINAL PROLAPSE, BUT THERE ARE MANY FACTORS WHICH MAY INCREASE THE RISK.

- 1) Obesity: excessive body condition ( $BCS \geq 4$ ) and abdominal fat
- 2) Age: more common in older females
- 3) Nutrition: poor quality hay, too much concentrate feeding, poor feeding practices
- 4) Estrogen: hay/pasture containing a high percentage of alfalfa or other legumes
- 5) Housing: insufficient feeder space and loafing area
- 6) Health: prolonged lying down due to lameness or subclinical hypocalcemia or acidosis
- 7) Litter size: more common with twins (5x)\* and triplets (11-12x)\*
- 8) Breed: more common in highly-prolific breeds
- 9) Shearing: ewes sheared during pregnancy experience fewer prolapses.\*
- 10) Exercise: too little or too much
- 11) Gravity: facing uphill while lying down or standing on high legs to eat
- 12) History: females that prolapse once are more likely to do it again (35-40%)\*
- 13) Genetics: should not retain replacements from females that prolapse
- 14) Short-tail docks: docking may damage structures that support pelvic girdle.

\*Epidemiology of vaginal prolapse in mixed-age ewes in New Zealand (New Zealand Veterinary Journal, 2014)

IF A FEMALE PROLAPSES HER VAGINA, THE VAGINA NEEDS TO BE HYGIENICALLY REINSERTED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. DELAYS IN TREATMENT CAN LEAD TO WORSE PROBLEMS. THE VAGINA CAN USUALLY BE RETAINED WITH A PLASTIC RETAINER (SPOON) AND/OR USING A ROPE OR READY-MADE HARNESS. FEMALES CAN USUALLY LAMB/KID SUCCESSFULLY WITH THESE DEVICES IN PLACE. SOMETIMES, A SUTURE IS NEEDED TO RETAIN THE PROLAPSE AND ANTIBIOTICS ARE GIVEN. THE SUTURE MUST BE REMOVED PRIOR TO PARTURITION.