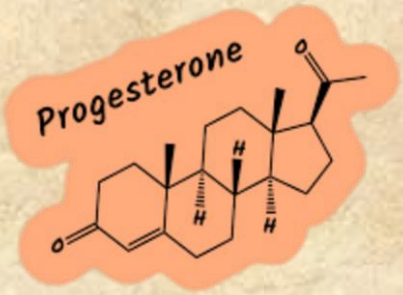
The Amazing PLACENTA

The placenta (afterbirth) is the tissue that connects the mother's uterus to the umbilical cord. The placenta provides oxygen and nutrients to the fetus, while fetal waste products are transferred back to the mother.

Though it may not look like it, each fetus has its own placenta. The placenta grows along with the fetus. For this reason, nutrition, especially during early to mid-pregnancy, is very important. Poor nutrition can reduce the size and function of the placenta, which can affect the viability and future productivity of the offspring.

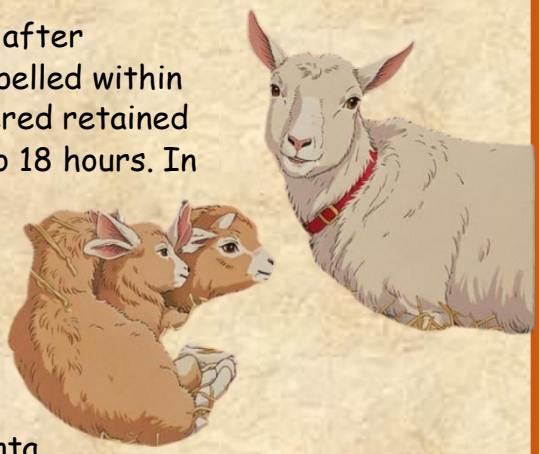


Progesterone is the hormone that maintains pregnancy. In sheep, the placenta is the source of progesterone (after day 50 of pregnancy). In goats, the CL(corpus luteum) is the primary source of progesterone throughout pregnancy. Due to this difference, parturition must be induced differently in goats and sheep.

Unlike the human placenta, the placenta of sheep/goats does not allow transfer of IgG (immunoglobulins) to the fetus. This is why colostrum consumption is so important, as it is the source of IgG for the newborn lamb/kid.

It is usually best to remove the placenta, especially in indoor lambing/kidding environments. The placenta can carry infectious pathogens, which could be transmitted to other sheep/goats. Scrapie is spread via infected placenta. Ditto with infectious causes of abortion.

The placenta is not needed after parturition. It is usually expelled within 6 hours. Placenta is considered retained if it is not expelled by 12 to 18 hours. In sheep/goats, treatment of retained placenta is usually antibiotics to prevent infection. While gentle traction can be applied, you should never attempt to pull out a retained placenta, as this can lead to complications. Causes of retained placenta include infections, nutritional deficiencies, and dystocia (difficult or prolonged birth).



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