# UDDER FACTS

The udder is a sac-like structure containing two mammary glands, each with a single teat. The primary function of the udder is to produce and secrete milk for the nourishment of lambs and kids. Milk production (lactogenesis) begins between day 95 and 100 of pregnancy.

**ALVEOLI** are microscopic sacs where milk is produced.

In sheep and goats, a larger portion of milk is stored in the cisterns. This differs from cows. Most of their milk is stored in the alveoli.

The presence of lambs/kids and their suckling behavior stimulates the release of prolactin and oxytocin, the two main hormones responsible for milk production. Prolactin stimulates milk production in the mammary glands, while oxytocin helps release milk from the glands into the ducts.

The **SUSPENSORY LIGAMENT** supports the udder and prevents it from sagging or breaking down under the weight of milk.

The udder has a system of **DUCTS** that transport milk from the alveoli to the cisterns and then out through the teat. Milk is also stored in the large ducts.

The **TEAT CISTERN** functions as a temporary storage area for milk before it is expelled from the teat.

The mammary glands have a large cistern, a reservoir that holds a significant portion of the milk produced. It is divided into a **GRAND CISTERN** and teat cistern. Animals with large cisterns produce more milk.

The **TEAT ORIFICE** (or teat opening) acts as a valve, preventing milk leakage and serving as a barrier against bacteria and other foreign material from entering the udder.

After weaning or drying-off, the udder undergoes a process called **MAMMARY INVOLUTION**, leading to changes in the alveoli.

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For more information, go to sheep 101.info/201/ or sheepandgoat.com.