



EARLY DILATION OF EWES

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This syndrome has been around for many years with no definitive answers for producers. The most common scenario is a black face ewe lamb that has after birth showing and fails to go into full labor and completely dilate the cervix. We also see this in white face ewe lambs and also in ewes that are previous lambers, but the majority of cases seem to involve the black face ewe lambs. There are many speculated causes for this and numerous suggested treatments, hopefully future research by universities will lead to a more scientific approach to this problem.

My current thoughts on dealing with a flock having problems are to treat all the remaining ewes with a 5cc/100 pounds of body weight with LA 200 every 9-10 days. It appears that the majority of these ewes are lambing 7-10 days early, much like an abortion, with low viability lambs. I recommend that the producer should manually dilate these ewes using their fingers in a cone shaped configuration to keep a steady pressure that will stretch the cervical rings. With some experience and changing arms a few times you should be able to dilate a ewe in 10-15 minutes. Be sure to use a lot of lubrication, take your time and I prefer to wear an OB sleeve. Often the lambs that are born are very low viability and the ewes fail to have adequate milk to feed them if they do survive. If you have live lambs delivered you will need to treat them as critical care lambs and tube feed them and supply a drying and warm environment. Once you notice a ewe has dilated far enough to release her "water bag" she should go into an active stage of labor which means forceful pushing within the hour if left undisturbed. If the ewe fails to progress into this second stage then you need to check and see if she has dilated. If she fails to dilate or make any progress over the next few hours then you need to help dilate her.

There is a treatment regime, which uses a combination of ECP and oxytocin, but it usually takes at least twelve hours and sometimes up to 24 hours for the ewe to dilate. I have noticed that more frequently by waiting you end up with dead lambs and a sicker ewe. By intervening earlier you have a chance to save the lambs and reduce the amount of stress on the ewe.

Do not forget to treat the ewe in the uterus with some tetracycline boluses and some parental penicillin. Also, the ewes that you help dilate or allow to strain for a day have a greater incidence of prolapsing their

uterus following delivery. Be sure to check the ewe frequently for the first several hours to check for a uterine prolapse.