



# WENSUM VALLEY VETS NEWSLETTER

## Stages of a normal lambing

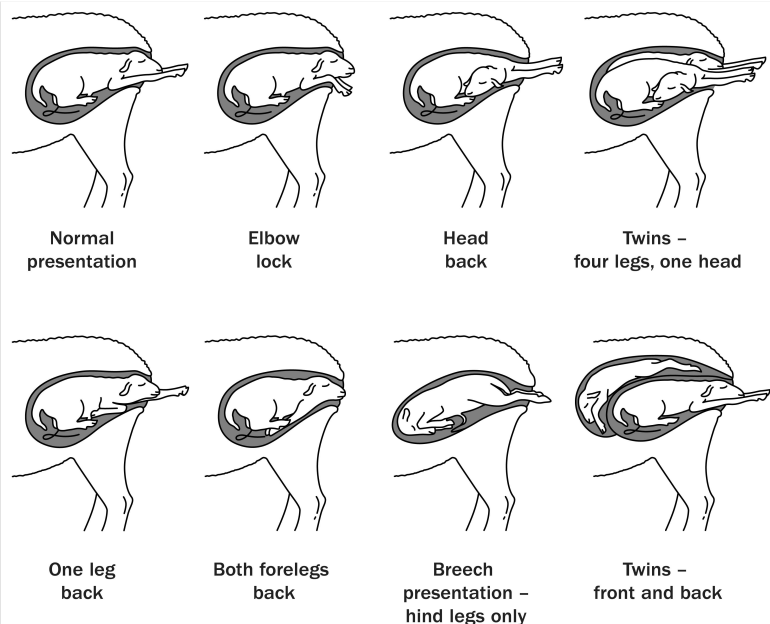


### Stage 1 - preparation (3-6 hours)

- Positioning of the lamb in the uterus
- Cervical dilation begins
- Uterine contractions begin
- Ewe becomes restless/agitated
- More rapid in older ewes

### Stage 2 - delivery (1-2 hours)

- Water sac appears
- Lamb enters birth canal
- Uterine and abdominal contractions
- Ends with birth of the lamb(s)



## Lambing Preparation

Lambing can be a busy and stressful time for everyone from large commercial units to smallholders and hobby breeders. This newsletter outlines some of the common issues faced and ways they can be treated, reduced or avoided.

### Dystocia/malpresentation

Normally lambs will present one at a time, in the 'diving position' seen above, however abnormal presentations often require correction to allow lambing to proceed. Intervention (putting a hand in) should be considered if the stages of lambing are not progressing at the



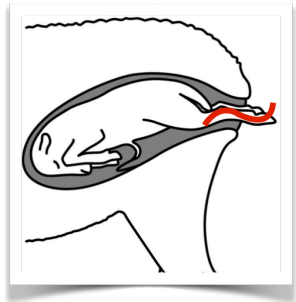
- Interval between lambs should be 10-60 mins and

### Stage 3 - cleansing (1-3 hours)

- Contractions decrease
- Placenta detaches from the uterus
- Placenta (afterbirth) is passed



normal rate or if the ewe seems excessively distressed. Front legs can be identified by the joints bending in the same direction, forming a 'C' shape, whereas the joints of back legs bend in opposite directions to form a 'Z' or 'S' shape.



### Twin Lamb Disease

Twin lamb disease, also known as pregnancy toxaemia, occurs when the ewe does not take in sufficient energy during late pregnancy and is forced to use her own body fat supplies which produces toxic byproducts. Twin lamb disease is most common in older ewes, signs include:

- Isolation
- Reduced appetite
- Lethargy/depression
- Weakness/recumbency
- Tremors
- Death

This can be prevented by providing adequate nutrition during gestation. However if treatment is required a 'twin lamb drench' containing Propylene Glycol is needed and

additional veterinary care may be required.

### Infectious causes of Abortion

EAE (Chlamydial abortion) - the most common infectious cause of abortion, EAE is difficult to eradicate once established but can be vaccinated against. It is mainly spread at lambing time via aborted lambs and fluids, but can also be spread through mating, infected replacement ewes and by clothing/hands/shoes.

Toxoplasma - caused by a protozoal parasite, transmitted by cats in their faeces, it can cause failure to conceive, abortion, mummification, stillbirth and the birth of weak lambs. Toxoplasma can also be vaccinated against.

Both are transmittable to pregnant humans!

### Hygiene Problems

Overstocking at lambing time can lead to increased spread of infections and lamb deaths due to 'watery mouth' (E.coli) or joint ill. Thorough navel dipping with concentrated iodine solution is important to reduce the risk, as well as disinfection of pens between uses and maintaining appropriate stocking levels in barns and lambing sheds.

