

10 WAYS TO IDENTIFY GOAT PREGNANCY

By Gail Damerow

If you must know whether your goats are pregnant, you can spend money on blood tests, X-rays, or ultrasounds. But all pregnant goats show some visible signs.

1. FAILURE TO RETURN TO HEAT.

The heat cycle can be from 17-25 days. Pregnant does will display little interest in bucks. At the end of the breeding season, an unsettled doe may not come back into heat.

2. APPETITE GOES UP, MILK PRODUCTION GOES DOWN.

A pregnant doe's appetite gradually increases. Milk production may decrease as her udder recedes. If still milking, stop no longer than 120 days after breeding, to give her body a rest.

3. THE DOE'S BELLY TIGHTENS.

Two weeks after breeding, her belly will tighten. Firmly press your fingers against her belly just in front of her udder. A settled doe's belly will feel tense and tight. An unbred doe's belly will feel soft though she may tense out of nervousness.

4. THE DOE'S PERSONALITY CHANGES.

Thanks to the hormone progesterone, a doe that is normally friendly toward

you may become standoffish. A typically shy doe may suddenly become your best friend. This change only lasts during the pregnancy.

5. THE BUCK'S PERSONALITY CHANGES.

If the doe is still housed with the breeder buck, an otherwise gentlemanly buck may become aggressive toward the bred doe or start keeping her away from the grain feeder

6. THE DOE'S BARREL SWELLS.

Some pregnant does fill out right away. Others don't show until several months after being bred, appearing to balloon overnight. If you measure each doe's barrel at the time of breeding, and then regularly each month, you can detect gradual increase.

7. THE DOE'S SHAPE CHANGES.

The doe's right side may stick out farther than the left. Swelling on the left side indicates a full rumen, although multiple kids may press into the rumen and cause her to bulge out on the left as well, giving

the doe a boat-like appearance. Some does develop a saggy belly. Others barely show until six weeks before labor begins.

8. THE DOE SNORES.

All goats sometimes snore when they're resting, especially while taking a siesta on a hot summer afternoon. But during pregnancy they snore more and louder than usual.

9. THE DOE'S UDDER SWELLS.

The udder may not fill out until days before kidding. During a doe's first pregnancy, her udder should gradually develop about six weeks after she settled and become rounded by 12 weeks gestation.

10. THE KIDS MOVE.

About four months gestation, you may feel movement, especially if the doe is carrying more than one kid. If you like surprises, you could always use the wait-and-see method. You will know your doe was successfully bred when kids suddenly appear in your barn. *Original story by Gail Damerow, published in 2015.*

