

SNATCH REARING AND PRE-WEANING KID MANAGEMENT

FACT SHEET



What is snatch rearing?

Snatch rearing refers to the removal of kids from does immediately after birth, either as assisted natural birthing or caesarean and removing them from the kidding pen immediately.

The kids are washed and dried to remove all birth secretions and membranes. They must not be allowed to suckle from does at any point. The kids are then reared in a clean environment and given colostrum from caprine arthritis encephalitis (CAE) and Johne's disease-negative tested goats, a specifically formulated artificial colostrum, or colostrum from cattle which are part of a Johne's disease accreditation program. They are then raised on milk replacer, water, concentrates and hay.

This practice helps prevent the spread of disease from does to kids. Ensuring successful passive transfer of immunoglobulins (antibodies), in colostrum to snatch-reared kids is critical to reduce the risk of disease and mortality.

Successful management of kids

When rearing kids in intensively managed systems, excellent hygiene and biosecurity are vital to reduce the risk of kids acquiring infections. Rearing facilities, including feeding and watering equipment must be well

maintained and kept thoroughly clean. Similarly, newborn kids must take in sufficient antibodies in colostrum to improve their immune response to infections encountered during early life.

Snatch rearing presents a challenge to managing passive immunity in newborn kids, and excellent colostrum management is essential. Failure to adhere to these practices can increase the likelihood of disease, which may result in kid mortality or failure to thrive.

Managing newborn kids

Kids must be removed from their dam immediately after birth to prevent the transmission of CAE, or within 12 hours of birth to minimise the risk of transmitting Johne's disease. It is vital that newborn kids receive colostrum of adequate quality, which is low risk for *Mycobacterium avium* subsp. *paratuberculosis* (the causative agent for Johne's disease) and CAE, within 12 hours of birth as immunoglobulin G (IgG) absorption decreases rapidly after this time.

Only colostrum from goats, from CAE negative and Johne's disease negative herds should be stored for feeding to kids. If a doe's health status is unknown, colostrum should be pasteurised, or a safe, powdered colostrum source used.

Storing colostrum

A farm usually needs a bank of stored colostrum available for supplementing newborn kids. There are different methods available for the management and storage of colostrum. The methods used on different farms will be determined by the need for controlling Johne's disease and CAE, and quantity of colostrum available.

Fresh colostrum can be stored covered in a refrigerator at 4°C and ideally, for no longer than a few days to avoid bacterial contamination and growth. Refrigeration and freezing do not inactivate CAE virus or kill *M. paratuberculosis*.

If colostrum must be stored for long periods, it can be frozen and thawed when needed. The IgG concentration is affected by the thaw/refreeze cycle, therefore freezing colostrum in small volumes should be considered.

Pasteurisation

Satisfactory pasteurisation is achieved by holding colostrum at 72°C for 15 seconds in a pressurised pasteuriser, or 63°C for 30 minutes in a conventional pasteuriser. The exit temperature at the end of the pasteurisation process must be checked, as most failures of pasteurisation result from not heating for long enough at a high enough temperature. Pasteurisation alone may not reduce the risk of Johne's disease as exposure to faecal contamination of the udder, rather than colostrum, is the most likely source of Johne's disease infection in kids.

Volume of colostrum required

Kids should generally receive a volume equivalent to 10–20% of their birthweight of 'good quality' colostrum. This total volume of colostrum should be given over several feeds within 12 hours of birth. Commercial powdered colostrum sources are available but since the suitability of these can vary, producers should use a high quality product.



Rearing sheds

The rearing shed needs to be dry, clean, well-drained and free from any draughts. It should be easily cleaned and disinfected between batches of kids, to reduce cross-contamination between batches and the spread of disease.

There are different options for flooring, including concrete slabs with clean straw topped up regularly, or raised open floors made of mesh or wooden slats. Open floors provide good hygiene but allow draughts. Dirt floors are undesirable because they are difficult to thoroughly clean between batches of kids.

Birthweight

Birthweight is associated with survival to weaning, and weighing kids as soon as they are snatched from the doe will help allocate attention and resources to the kids that need them the most. The survival rate of twins with lower birthweights is less than that of corresponding singles. Low birthweight kids (< 2.8 kg) need extra attention to ensure they receive adequate colostrum in the first 12 hours after birth. They should ideally also be reared in a separate pen away from larger kids to reduce competition for milk and other feed.

Animal Health Australia

Animal Health Australia (AHA) works in partnership with our Members and other stakeholders to keep Australia free of new and emerging diseases and to improve animal health, enhance market access and foster the resilience of the Australian animal health system.

This fact sheet has been developed by:

