Trouble with Twins
By Amy McLean, PhD

In some livestock species such as sheep or goats twins are not uncommon and desired but in horses twins are trouble. Granted, some breeders may have been successful in raising twin foals but most are not so lucky! Many complications can arise from a mare carrying twins. Twin foals generally have a low survival rate, may have conformational issues, and are very weak in the beginning. Most often the mare will not go to term meaning she will not carry the foals for the approximate 11-month gestation period and if the mare does go to term generally one or both foals will be born dead and the other born smaller and weaker. Also, the taller the mare or donkey the more likely she is to carry twins. The correlation between height and double ovulation (twinning) is not completely understood but Draft mares, Thoroughbreds, and Mammoth jennies more often than mares or jennies of smaller stature (e.g. a pony or light mare) are prone to twinning. Older mares that are considered to be a “barren” mare may also produce twins.

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For the first fifteen days the embryo in the mare will be mobile meaning it will move from the right and left uterine horn. Ideally, one would like to establish by ultrasound if a mare is carrying twin embryos and at that time prior to fixation (conceptus fixation - the act where the embryo is no longer mobile or moving from horn to horn and is now “fixed” in the uterus) your veterinarian can eliminate either one or both of the embryos. Occasionally, one embryo at this point maybe smaller in size and naturally dissolve. Twins embryos can still be managed or reduced/removed later in pregnancy such as by day 21-22. If twins are suspected then the mare should be checked more than once to establish if she is or isn’t carrying twins. It’s especially important to check for twins in older mares that have been “barren” or not producing foals for a long time or ever. The veterinarian can pinch off one of the twin embryos or eliminate both embryos. Typically, one embryo will be smaller than the other.

One of the major reasons for late term abortion in mares is twinning. Twinning is also a reason for many complications in the foaling process with mares. A mare that foals and continues to look as if she is showing signs of colic or signs of distress (looking at her flanks, getting up and down a lot or abnormal behavior) have your veterinarian check for another foal immediately. Often times the twin that’s born will have complications such as maladjustment foal syndrome, which we will discuss in the next article. Basically, this syndrome is common to foals born a twin and hemorrhage is found in their brain and the foal will be born with the natural suckle reflex but it will diminish within 48 hours and the condition of the foal will deteriorate. So, through proper management prevent twins by having your mare checked around day 14-15 after breeding and then follow up by day 22.

For more information on twins in horses check out:

http://www.extension.org/pages/11358/twinning-in-mares
The Secret to Daytime Calving

Progressive Farmer

Whether you have 20 cows or 200, there is nothing less pleasant than crawling out of bed in the middle of a cold night to check for calving problems. What if you don’t have to?

See full article at:

New BSE Rule Would Boost U.S. Beef Export

AgriMarketing

Chief Veterinary Officer for the USDA, Dr. John Clifford, said a proposed rule to bring U.S. import regulations for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in line with science-based, international animal health standards will help open markets for U.S. beef.

See full article at:
http://www.agrimarketing.com/s/73603
Scours – How Do We Know What We Are Looking At?

Dr. Russ Daly

Having cases of diarrhea occur in baby calves presents the cow-calf producer with many questions—the first of which may be, “What germ is causing this problem?”

See full article at:


Commercial Herds Should Take Advantage of Crossbreeding

Cattle Today

What is heterosis? Heterosis, hybrid vigor, free lunch — whatever it is called, the advantages of crossbreeding in the cow herd can be significant for the operation.

See Full article at:

http://cattletoday.com/archive/2012/March/CT2678.php
The Animal Science Department, in collaboration with the Wyoming Rambouillet Association has conducted an annual ram test beginning in 1961. This was the 50th anniversary of the ram test. The 2011-2012 test was started the 10th of October and the rams were weighed off the test on the 27th of February, for a total of 140 days on test. Eighteen producers with a total of 90 rams participated in this year's test, 70 purebred Rambouillet, 4 commercial Rambouillet and 16 Targhee rams participated.

The test utilizes an index to identify the superior performing rams on the test. The index includes ADG, staple length of wool, pounds of clean wool and fiber diameter and variability of diameter points. Data also collected includes, average fiber diameter and fiber diameter variability as measured from the whole fleece, loin eye area and fat depth at the 12th rib (as collected via ultrasound), scrotal circumference, face and body wrinkle scores in addition to a score for belly wool. The last several years the test has made use of the Growsafe System which allows for the collection of daily feed intake. This provides invaluable information regarding the efficiency by which a ram can convert feed into his overall growth. Increased feed efficiency leads to decreased feed costs to produce the same amount of saleable lean meat.

The overall averages of the Purebred Rambouillet rams on test were: ADG .83; 360 day adjusted Clean Fleece Weight 10.6 lbs; 360 day adjusted Staple Length 4.8 inches; Fiber Diameter in microns 22.7; LEA/CWT 1.53 sq in; BF .22 in; SC 34.6 cm. The Index value ranged from a top of 131.5 to a low of 88.15 with an average Index value of 111.03.

The overall averages of the top 30% of the Purebred Rambouillet rams on test were (these rams eligible for certification through the American Rambouillet Association): ADG .93; 360 day adjusted Clean Fleece Weight 11.4 lbs; 360 day adjusted Staple Length 4.9 inches; Fiber Diameter in microns 22.5; LEA/CWT 1.53 sq in; BF .22 in; SC 35.6 cm. The Index value ranged from top of 131.5 to the low of 118.10 with an average Index of 122.56.

The overall averages of all the rams on test were: ADG .79; 360 day adjusted Clean Fleece Weight 10.3 lbs; 360 day adjusted Staple Length 4.8 inches; Fiber Diameter in microns 23.1; LEA/CWT 1.55 sq in; BF .23 in; SC 34.4 cm. The index ranged from the top of 131.5 to a low of 77.47 with an average index of 107.07.

The top indexing ram of this year’s ram test was consigned by the Hageman Sisters, Douglas Wyoming. Their ram, test number 44 had the following results: ADG .85; 360 day adjusted Clean Fleece Weight 14.4 lbs; 360 day adjusted Staple Length 5.6 inches; Fiber Diameter in microns 22.7; LEA/CWT 1.50 sq in; BF .20 in; SC 36.5.6 cm with the top index of 131.5.

Photo: The top indexing ram consigned by the Hageman Sisters Rambouillets, Douglas Wyoming. From the right, Tracy Dilts, Tiffany Hageman and Tracy’s daughter, Makayla Porter.