

# Goat Kidding

**Intro to Breeding, Gestation and Prenatal Care**

**Kidding Kit**

**Signs of Impending Labor and Stages of Labor**

**Kidding Positions and Assisting with Birth**

**Post Kidding Care**



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PDF available on <https://flyingfeetsfarm.weebly.com/4h.html>

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# Intro to breeding, Gestation, and Prenatal Care

Having baby goats is one of the most wonderful and joyful experiences a goat owner can have, the babies are incredibly cute, playful and cuddly. It is important to be prepared and educate yourself as much as possible before taking on the responsibility of breeding your goats, it can be so rewarding, but it is a ton of work and sometimes things don't go according to plan. It will be much easier for you if you are prepared as possible before making the decision to breed your goats.

## Breeding / Kidding, What to know

Does can become pregnant as early as 8 weeks old, this is far too young for a doe to become pregnant and safely kid.

A doe's heat cycle is every 18 to 25 days, depending on what breed you have your does can cycle seasonally (Fall) or year around.

Bucks can breed as early as 6 weeks, while this isn't harmful to the buck kids, they can potentially breed their dam, sisters and other herdmates causing unplanned pregnancies.

Depending on your goat's breed, bucks will either have a seasonal rut (Fall) or will breed year around.

Does can have anywhere between 1 and 5 kids (in rare cases more), most commonly does kid with 1 to 3 kids.

Does should only be bred once per year, continual breeding can shorten their lives and be detrimental to their health.

Bucks can breed many times each year safely with adequate nutrition.

Standard breed does should be at least 8 months old and at least 80lbs to breed and miniature breeds should be at least 8 months old, at least 40lbs and over 18 inches tall at the shoulder before breeding. \*With miniature breeds it doesn't hurt to wait to breed until does are over a year old to be on the safe side.

Complications can happen with pregnancy and kidding, it is in yours and your goat's best interest to have a veterinarian who will help you if the need arises. Also it is good to have a friendship with an experienced breeder that you can call to help you when you're not sure if your goat needs vet care or kidding assistance.

Pregnancy can be confirmed with either blood testing or ultrasound as early as 30 days gestation, do not rely on physical signs for indication of pregnancy, some does may no show no outward signs of pregnancy until you go out and find a baby in their pen.

## **Breeding / Kidding, What to Know Continued**

Always try to use the best buck you have access to for breeding your does, you should always be trying to improve your breed because it costs just as much to feed a top quality goat as it does to feed a goat of poor quality.

Gestation length for goats is between 140 to 160 days. Standard breeds usually kid around day 150 and miniature breeds usually kid around day 145.

Newborn kids need shelter that protects them from the elements, the first few days of life they may not be able to regulate their body temperature and can easily become chilled or overheated, which can be deadly for newborn kids.

Signs of heat may include tail wagging, swelling of vulva, more vocal, vaginal discharge, fighting with other goats more than usual, decrease in milk production, acting bucky; blubbering, mounting other goats, letting other goats mount her.

Goats need careful feeding during pregnancy, overfeeding and underfeeding your doe during pregnancy can cause complications with pregnancy and kidding. Your doe needs to have adequate vitamins and minerals to stay healthy during pregnancy. Each individual does needs may vary with what she needs to have a healthy pregnancy and kidding. Many new goat owners make the mistake of overfeeding pregnant does during pregnancy that only causes complications with late pregnancy and kidding. Please work with a veterinarian familiar with goats to figure out your goats nutritional needs and care during pregnancy.

Vaccines such as CD&T and the pneumonia vaccine should be given a month prior to kidding. If you supplement with vitamins such as BoSe and Copper these should be given a month before kidding as well.

Stay on top of trimming your doe's hooves during pregnancy, the added weight of kids can cause extra strain on your doe's feet and legs. If feet are overgrown this can make your doe very sore and could potentially lead to her not wanting to get up to eat and drink.

# Preparing Your Kidding Kit

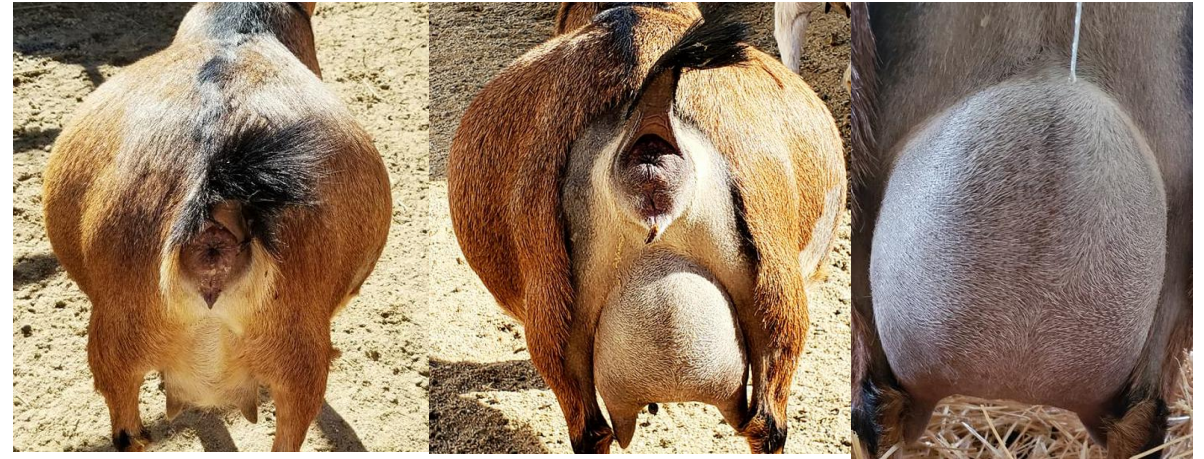
- Paper towels or old bathroom towels, you can't have enough of these, kidding can be very messy.
- Puppy Pee Pads (unscented), or sanitary pads; these are great to set kids on to dry them off so they stay clean.
- Hair dryer, great for when you need to dry kids quickly in cold weather.
- Heating pad, to set kids on while drying.
- Dental floss and sharp scissors; sometimes you need to tie off umbilical cords next to the kid's belly if they won't stop bleeding or trim them if they are really long.
- Iodine and a small container to dip umbilical cords.
- Gloves; I like to have both shoulder length gloves and regular sanitary gloves.
- Lube, in case your doe needs assistance.
- OB Kid Puller, just in case you need to pull a kid.
- Baby Nasal Aspirator, to clear kids airways.
- CMPK or Calcium, some does will not have good contractions if they are calcium deficient.
- Kid Start Paste, BoSe (or selenium gel) for weak kids.
- Colostrum or Colostrum replacer, in case doe doesn't have any.
- Trash bags, for easy cleanup.
- Shavings or straw for bedding in kidding pen to keep things clean.
- Syringe and Tube for tube feeding and baby bottle in case doe rejects kid or if you pull to bottle feed.
- Molasses, to give your doe mixed with warm water after kidding to replenish fluids and for energy.
- The phone number of a veterinarian familiar with goats and the phone number of a breeder for guidance and mentoring.
- Plastic storage totes, one to keep your kidding kit supplies in and one to put kids in if you pull to bottle feed.



# Signs of Labor

After about 135 to 140 days of gestation start watching your doe for signs of labor. A doe entering labor may show all or none of these signs, become familiar with your does personality and physical appearance so that you can easily notice any changes that may indicate kidding is near.

- Loosening of ligaments on either side of tailhead until they are almost gone or completely gone.
- Sunken area on either side of tailhead from ligaments loosening.
- Udder filling up, many does will fill significantly a day or two before kidding.
- Staring off into space, pressing head against wall or fence.
- Being more affectionate towards you or not wanting to be touched.
- Pawing the ground, getting up and down, pacing, restlessness.
- Being more vocal, moaning, making soft bleats.
- Licking her sides, the air, or anything else in reach of her mouth
- Stretching and yawning.
- Long stringy discharge from vulva, sometimes amber colored (note that some does start losing their mucus plug up to 6 weeks in advance).
- Tail head raised, back arching, vulva sinking inwards, these are signs of a contraction.
- Separating herself from the herd, hiding in a quiet area away from the others.
- Acting different from her normal self.



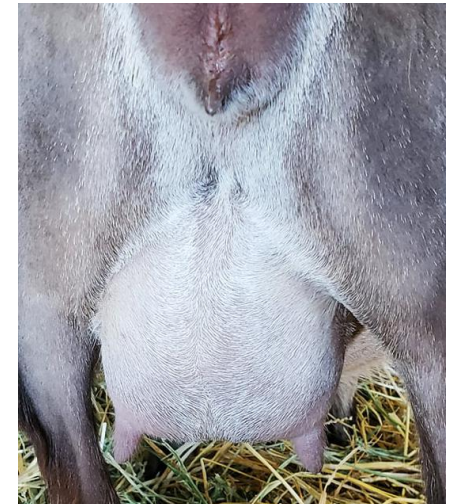
6 weeks before kidding    2 weeks before kidding    Day of kidding  
Note mucus string on far upper right picture.

2 days before kidding



Yearling first freshening doe.  
Not all does get huge udders before kidding.

Day of kidding



# Signs of Labor Continued

More Pictures of does entering Labor.



On Left: Ligaments gone on either side tailhead.

Middle: Stretching and head pressing.



On Right: Doe losing her mucus plug.



On Left: Contraction! Tail stiff and vulva sinking inwards. This is an excellent example of what a contraction looks like on a goat



Middle: Contraction! back arched, tail stiff, and vulva sinking inwards.

On Right: Contraction! vulva sinking inwards, tail raised.

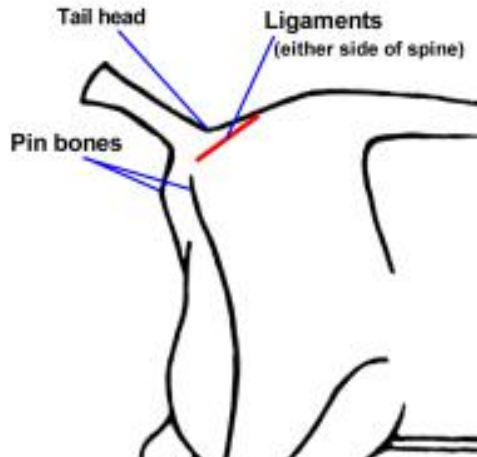


# Stages of Labor

## Pre- Labor

Once the baby is fully formed and ready to be born hormones are released that bring on the start of labor. This period may begin just hours before kidding or a couple days before kidding. During this time your doe shouldn't act distressed or extremely uncomfortable, though she may act or look slightly different than her normal self.

- You may start to notice behavioral or physical changes in your doe during this time.
- Udder may start to fill
- Ligaments may loosen and disappear
- Belly shape may change and she suddenly might look skinny.
- Doe may start yawning and stretching more to get kids into birthing position



Location of ligaments that loosen prior to kidding. These ligaments start out hard and almost feel like a pencil. Try to become familiar with feeling these ligaments on your doe.

## First Stage: Early Labor

During this time your doe will start to have contractions, your doe may show many signs or no signs that she is in labor at this time. This period usually lasts between 6 and 12 hours, the contractions will cause your doe to start to dilate and move kids towards the birth canal. During early labor I check my does every 1 to 2 hours.

- Your doe will probably have a full udder at this time.
- She may start nesting (pawing), and be restless.
- She may become more vocal.
- Contractions may be noticeable.
- She may become more affectionate or standoffish.

# Stages of Labor Continued

## Second Stage: Active Labor

Eventually after the kid has moved to press against your doe's cervix she will feel the urge to push to deliver her kid(s). Keep track of the time when your doe enters this stage, she should have a kid within 30 minutes of her first hard push or her water breaking (indicated by a gush of runny fluid, sometimes looks like urine).

- Your doe will most likely lay down while pushing, though some prefer to stand.
- Your doe may start crying out and grunting while pushing.
- She may start shifting around constantly trying to get comfortable, some even roll around with their legs in the air.
- Your doe may curl her lip, stretch neck out and lean forward while pushing.
- You might see her belly tighten when she starts pushing.
- Her vulva may start to bulge and a “bubble” will most likely appear.
- The bubble may burst; her water breaking. You may also see the kid inside the bubble, sometimes the kid is in a separate bubble behind the first bubble.
- Once the kid appears the doe will push until she delivers the kid, it usually takes just a few minutes for her to push the kid out once the kid appears.
- Once she pushes the kid out she will start to clean the kid and if she is carrying multiple kids she should have the next kids within 30 minutes of the first kid.

## Third Stage: Delivery of the Placenta

Once your doe delivers all her kids she will probably stand up within a few minutes to clean them and let them nurse. She will now start to deliver the placenta, her cleaning her kids and kids nursing will stimulate more contractions to help with the delivery of the placenta.

- Delivery of the placenta can take a while, sometimes up to 12 hours or more.
- Your doe may still paw the ground and look uncomfortable during this time.
- You may see the placenta hanging from her vulva.
- Never pull on the placenta! If it's still attached to her uterus this can kill her.



On Left and Right  
Start of the  
delivery of kid in  
diving position.



# Signs Your Doe Needs Assistance

## Signs Your Doe May Need Assistance

- Acting lethargic / weak during labor
- Unable to stand or walk
- Labor not progressing after about 12 hours of strong contractions, or your doe has weak contractions that never get stronger after 12 hours.
- Bleeding from vulva. Some blood tinged streaks in mucus is normal. Heavy bleeding before delivery, and blood that is dark red, dark red brown or brownish is not normal.
- Foul smelling discharge from vulva.
- Pushing or water has been broken for more than 30 minutes and has not delivered a kid.
- Not passing afterbirth within 24 hours of kidding.

## What to do if you think your doe needs assistance.

- Most importantly stay calm, your doe can sense your feelings and panicking will not help, it will only make things more stressful for you and your doe.
- If you are not comfortable or not confident enough to internally check your doe it is time to call a veterinarian or see if an experienced breeder can give you some guidance. If you notice your doe acting weak, lethargic, or if she's having trouble standing or walking it's definitely time to call the vet!
- If your doe has been pushing or water has been broken for over 30 minutes and if you are comfortable and feel confident enough to do an internal check now is the time to do so.

Disclaimer! I am not a vet and you should always consult with your vet before attempting to assist your doe, if done incorrectly you can cause internal tearing, damage tissues, cause infertility or even death of your goat and unborn kids if done incorrectly. I am giving you this information solely so you can save your doe if a kid gets stuck or isn't in the correct position to come out and have no way of getting a vet to do it for you.

# Signs Your Doe Needs Assistance Continued

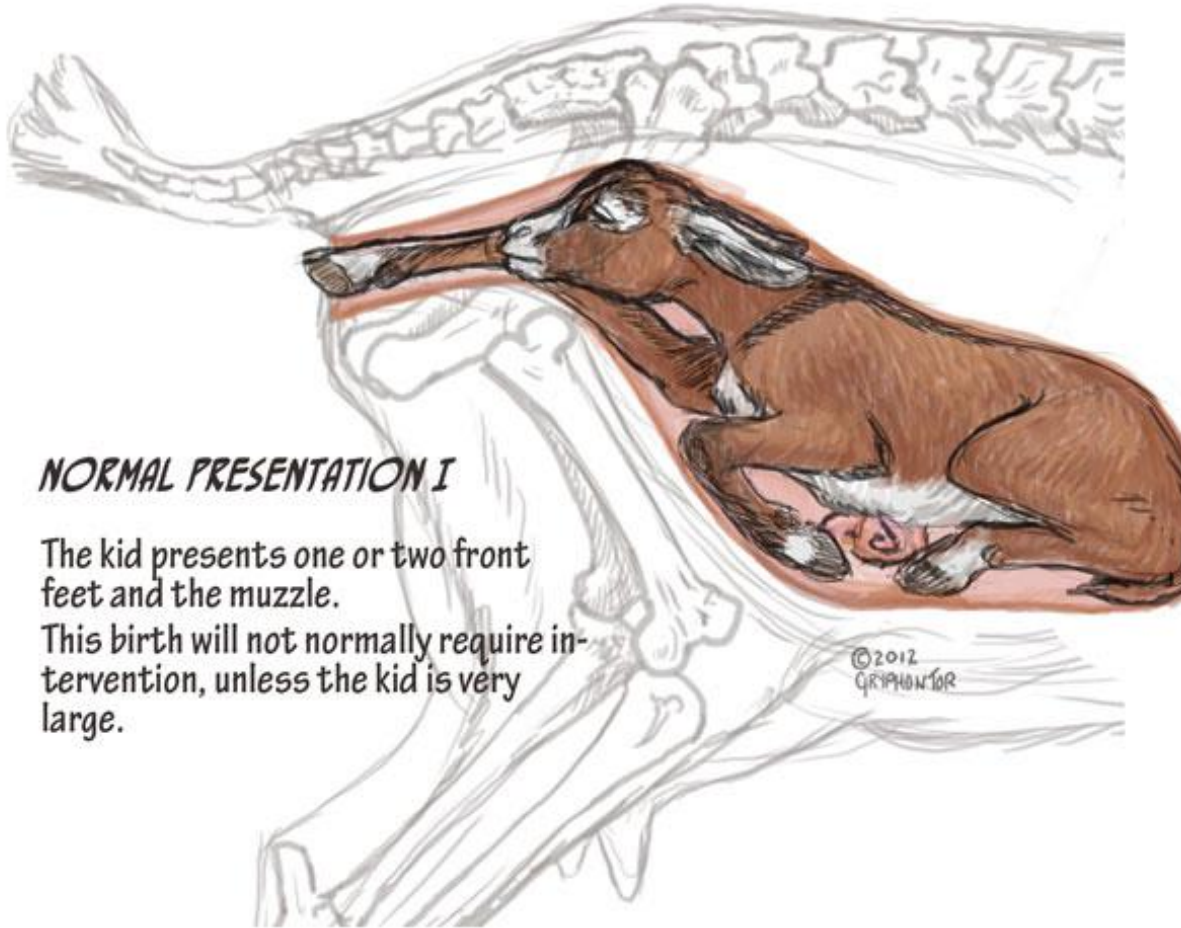
To internally check, first get gloves and lube ready to use, then either have someone help restrain your doe. Have your kid puller close by.

- If you're by yourself, tie her up to the fence or put her on the milk stand to help keep her still and restrained while internally checking your doe.
- Put on gloves and apply a liberal amount of lube onto your gloved hand, start by inserting one finger into your doe's vagina as far in as you can go to see if you feel a kid, if you do not you will need to slowly insert more fingers until you can get your whole hand inside the doe.
- Be gentle, take your time, if you get upset doing this take a small break to collect yourself before going back at it. Your doe will most likely cry out while you're doing this and try to push out your hand, this is normal, stay calm and apply firm slow steady pressure until you can get fully inside the doe, it's okay to take your time, no need to rush.
- Once inside the doe you will need to figure out what part of the kid you are feeling to position it correctly to be born. Have your kid puller easily accessible.



# Kidding Positions

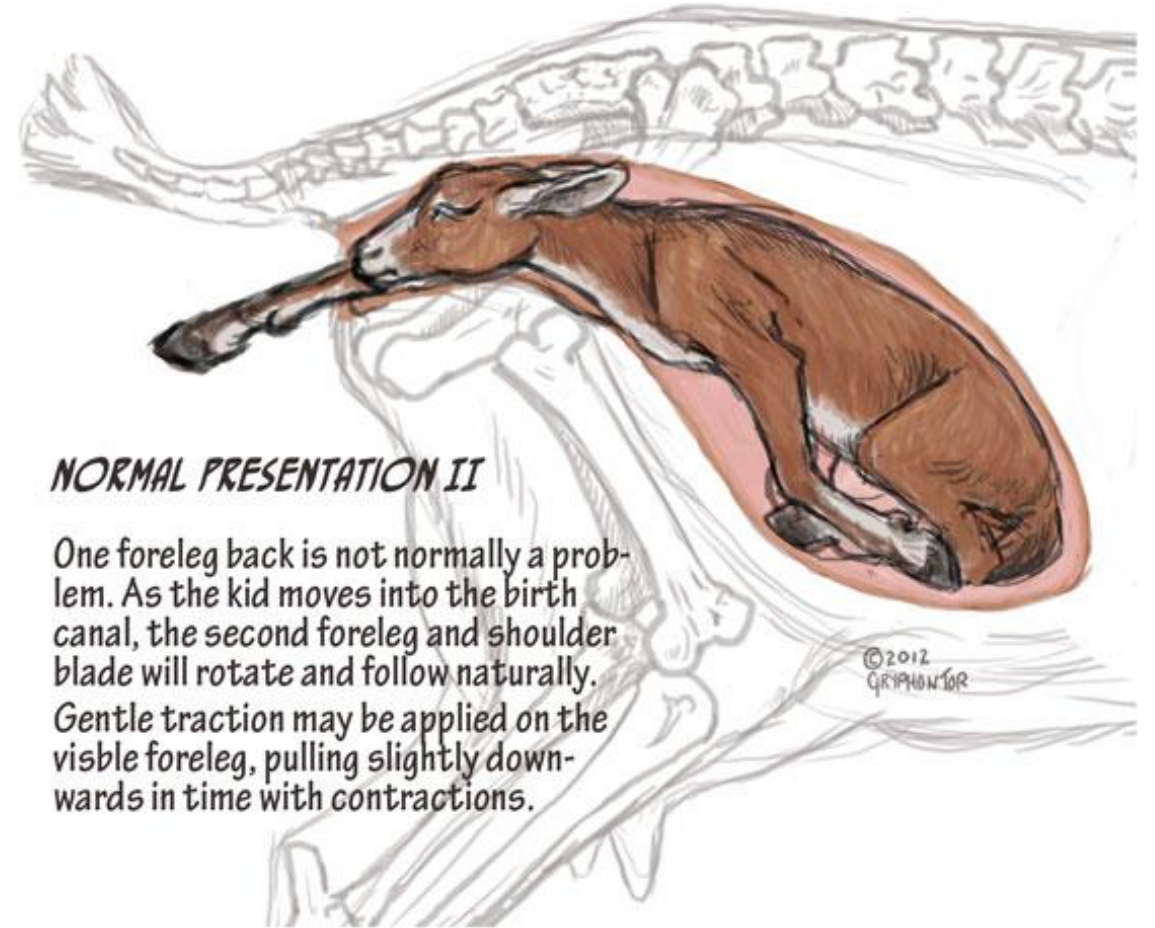
Illustrations courtesy of Mythos Farm



## ***NORMAL PRESENTATION I***

The kid presents one or two front feet and the muzzle.

This birth will not normally require intervention, unless the kid is very large.



## ***NORMAL PRESENTATION II***

One foreleg back is not normally a problem. As the kid moves into the birth canal, the second foreleg and shoulder blade will rotate and follow naturally.

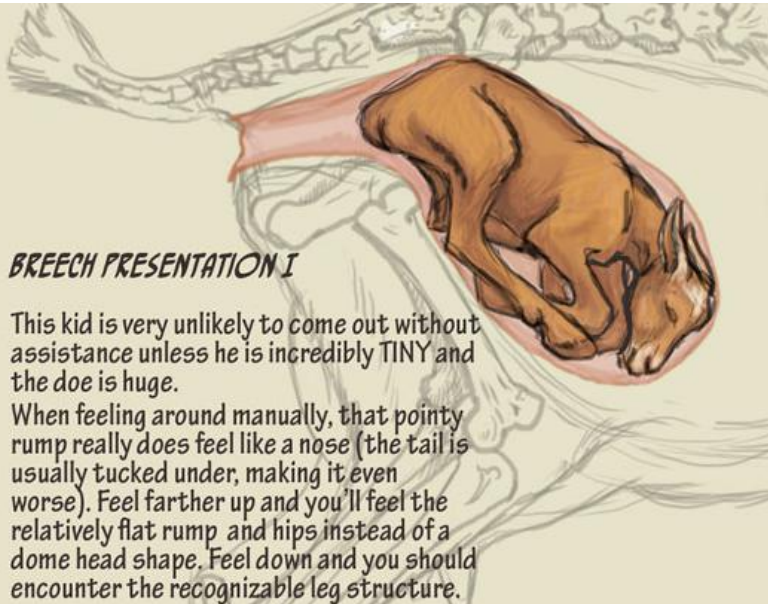
Gentle traction may be applied on the visible foreleg, pulling slightly downwards in time with contractions.

# Kidding Positions Continued

## BREECH PRESENTATION I

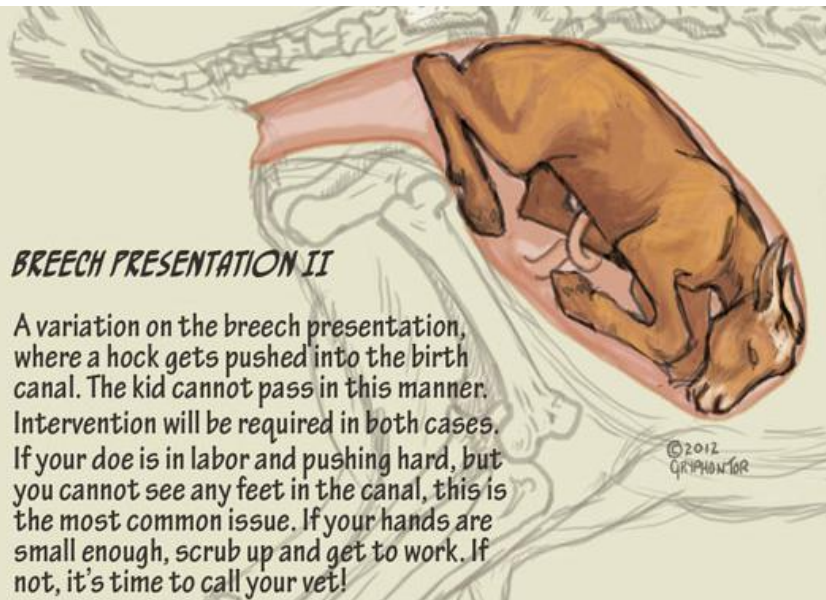
This kid is very unlikely to come out without assistance unless he is incredibly TINY and the doe is huge.

When feeling around manually, that pointy rump really does feel like a nose (the tail is usually tucked under, making it even worse). Feel farther up and you'll feel the relatively flat rump and hips instead of a dome head shape. Feel down and you should encounter the recognizable leg structure.



## BREECH PRESENTATION II

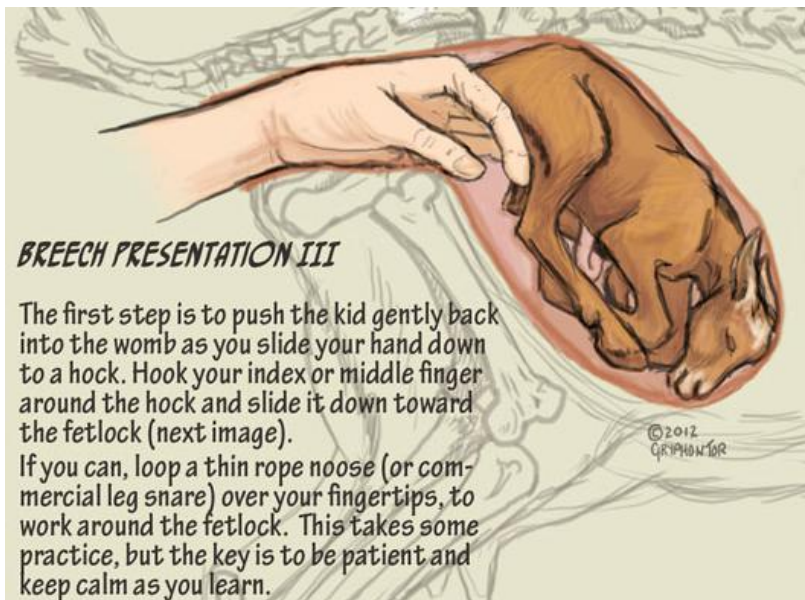
A variation on the breech presentation, where a hock gets pushed into the birth canal. The kid cannot pass in this manner. Intervention will be required in both cases. If your doe is in labor and pushing hard, but you cannot see any feet in the canal, this is the most common issue. If your hands are small enough, scrub up and get to work. If not, it's time to call your vet!



## BREECH PRESENTATION III

The first step is to push the kid gently back into the womb as you slide your hand down to a hock. Hook your index or middle finger around the hock and slide it down toward the fetlock (next image).

If you can, loop a thin rope noose (or commercial leg snare) over your fingertips, to work around the fetlock. This takes some practice, but the key is to be patient and keep calm as you learn.

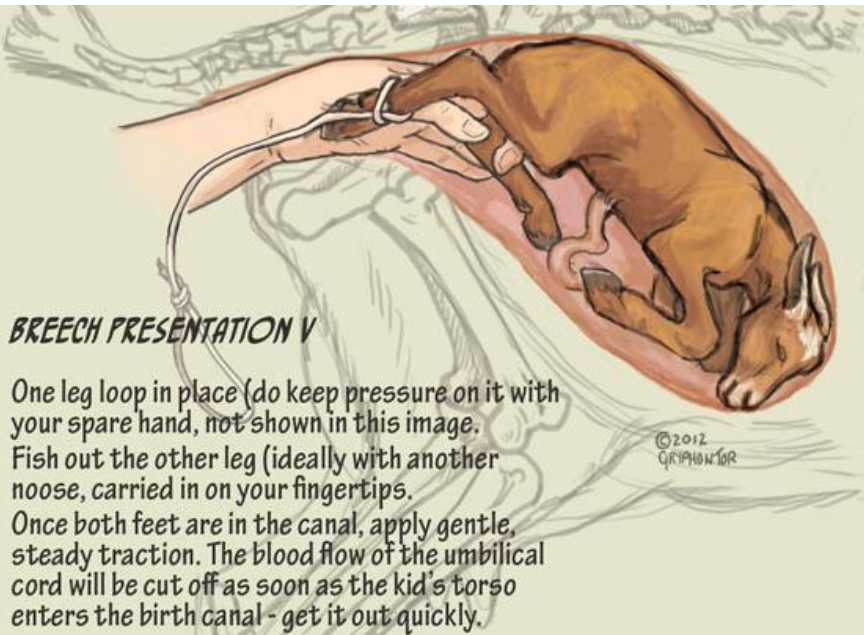


## BREECH PRESENTATION V

One leg loop in place (do keep pressure on it with your spare hand, not shown in this image).

Fish out the other leg (ideally with another noose, carried in on your fingertips).

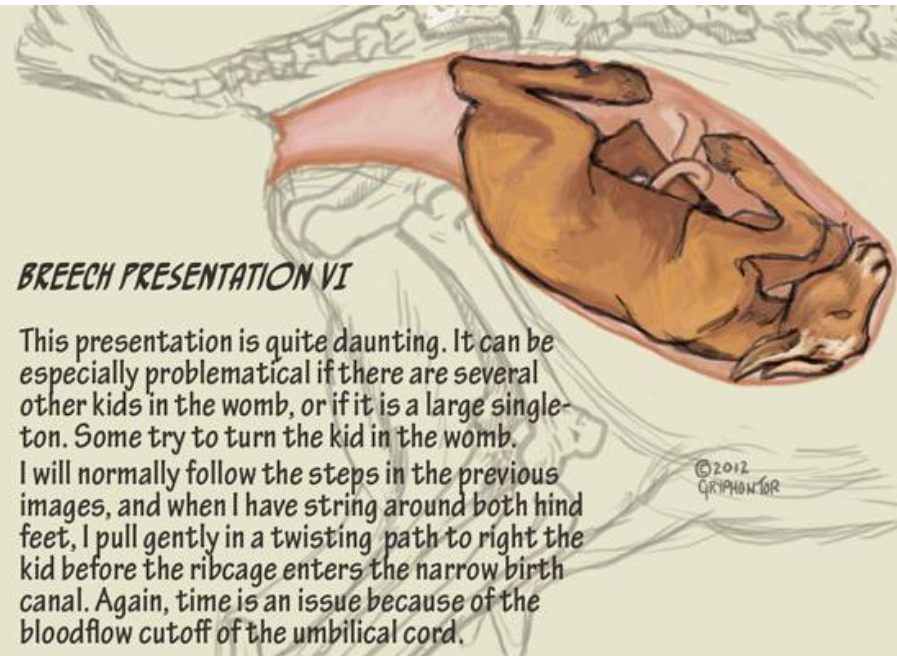
Once both feet are in the canal, apply gentle, steady traction. The blood flow of the umbilical cord will be cut off as soon as the kid's torso enters the birth canal - get it out quickly.



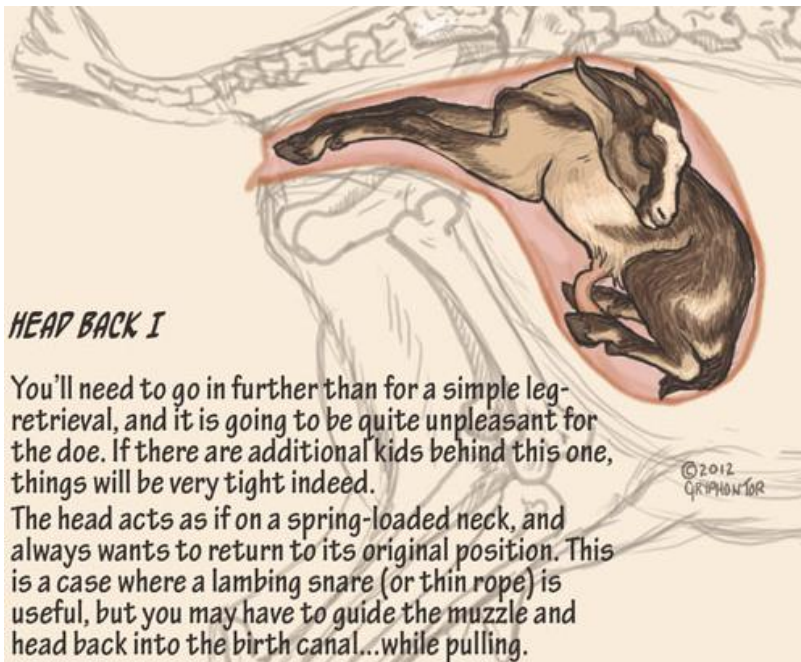
## BREECH PRESENTATION VI

This presentation is quite daunting. It can be especially problematic if there are several other kids in the womb, or if it is a large singleton. Some try to turn the kid in the womb.

I will normally follow the steps in the previous images, and when I have string around both hind feet, I pull gently in a twisting path to right the kid before the ribcage enters the narrow birth canal. Again, time is an issue because of the bloodflow cutoff of the umbilical cord.



# Kidding Positions Continued

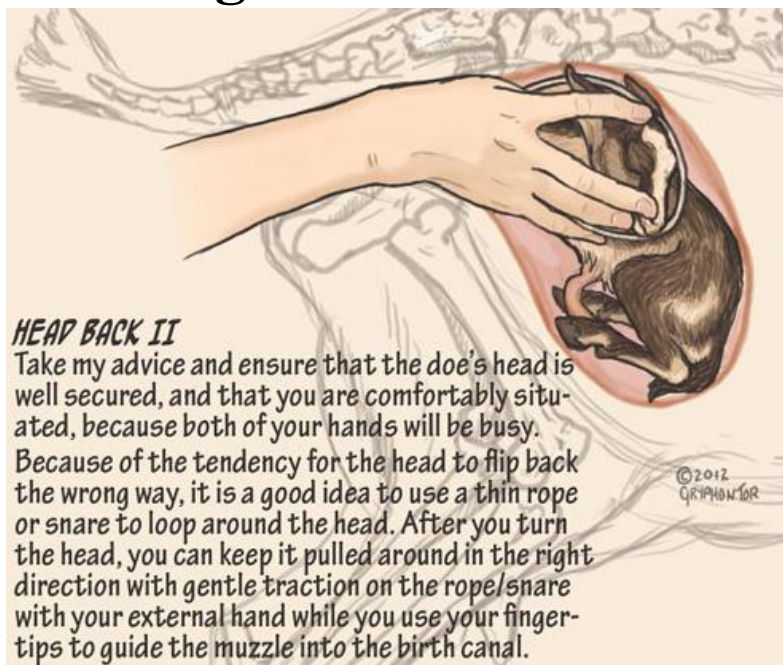


## HEAD BACK I

You'll need to go in further than for a simple leg-retrieval, and it is going to be quite unpleasant for the doe. If there are additional kids behind this one, things will be very tight indeed.

The head acts as if on a spring-loaded neck, and always wants to return to its original position. This is a case where a lambing snare (or thin rope) is useful, but you may have to guide the muzzle and head back into the birth canal...while pulling.

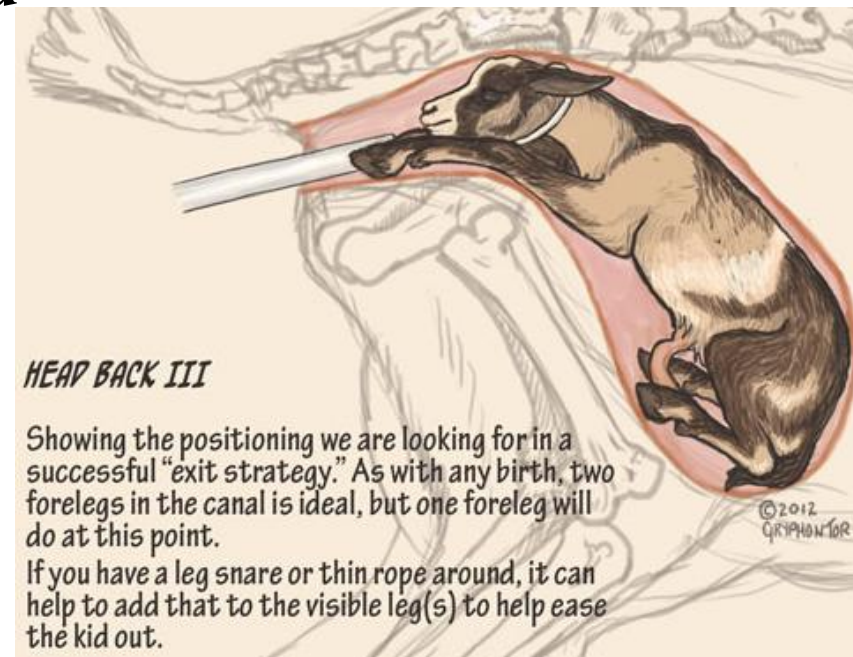
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## HEAD BACK II

Take my advice and ensure that the doe's head is well secured, and that you are comfortably situated, because both of your hands will be busy. Because of the tendency for the head to flip back the wrong way, it is a good idea to use a thin rope or snare to loop around the head. After you turn the head, you can keep it pulled around in the right direction with gentle traction on the rope/snare with your external hand while you use your fingertips to guide the muzzle into the birth canal.

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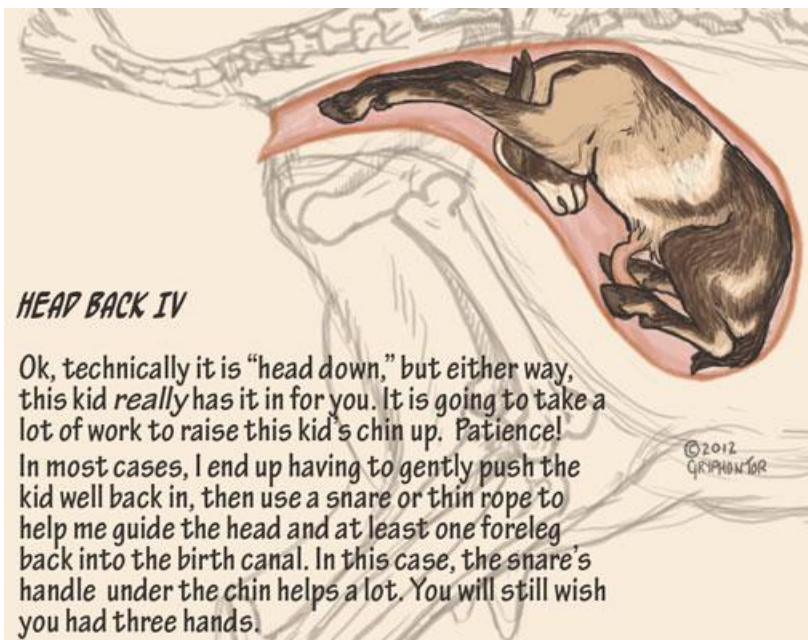


## HEAD BACK III

Showing the positioning we are looking for in a successful "exit strategy." As with any birth, two forelegs in the canal is ideal, but one foreleg will do at this point.

If you have a leg snare or thin rope around, it can help to add that to the visible leg(s) to help ease the kid out.

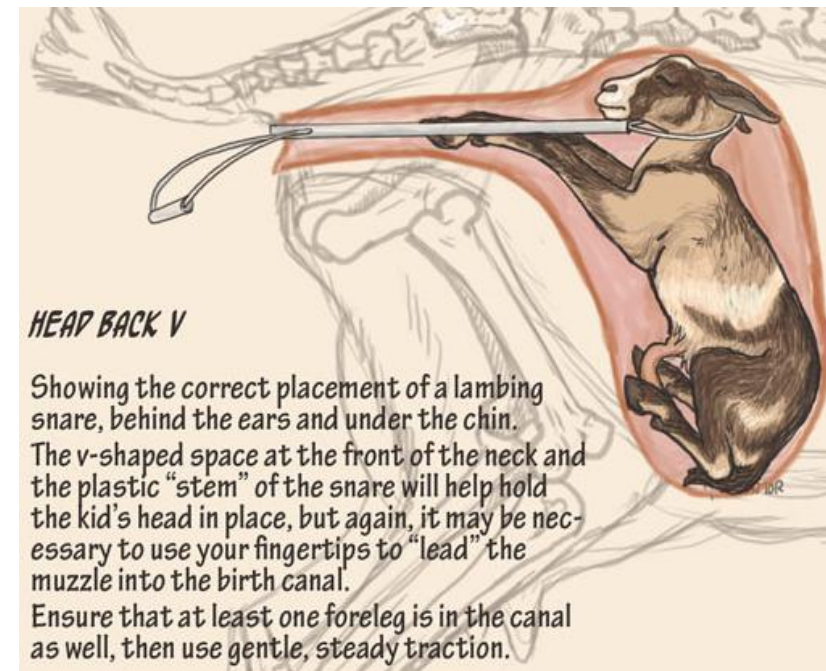
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## HEAD BACK IV

Ok, technically it is "head down," but either way, this kid *really* has it in for you. It is going to take a lot of work to raise this kid's chin up. Patience! In most cases, I end up having to gently push the kid well back in, then use a snare or thin rope to help me guide the head and at least one foreleg back into the birth canal. In this case, the snare's handle under the chin helps a lot. You will still wish you had three hands.

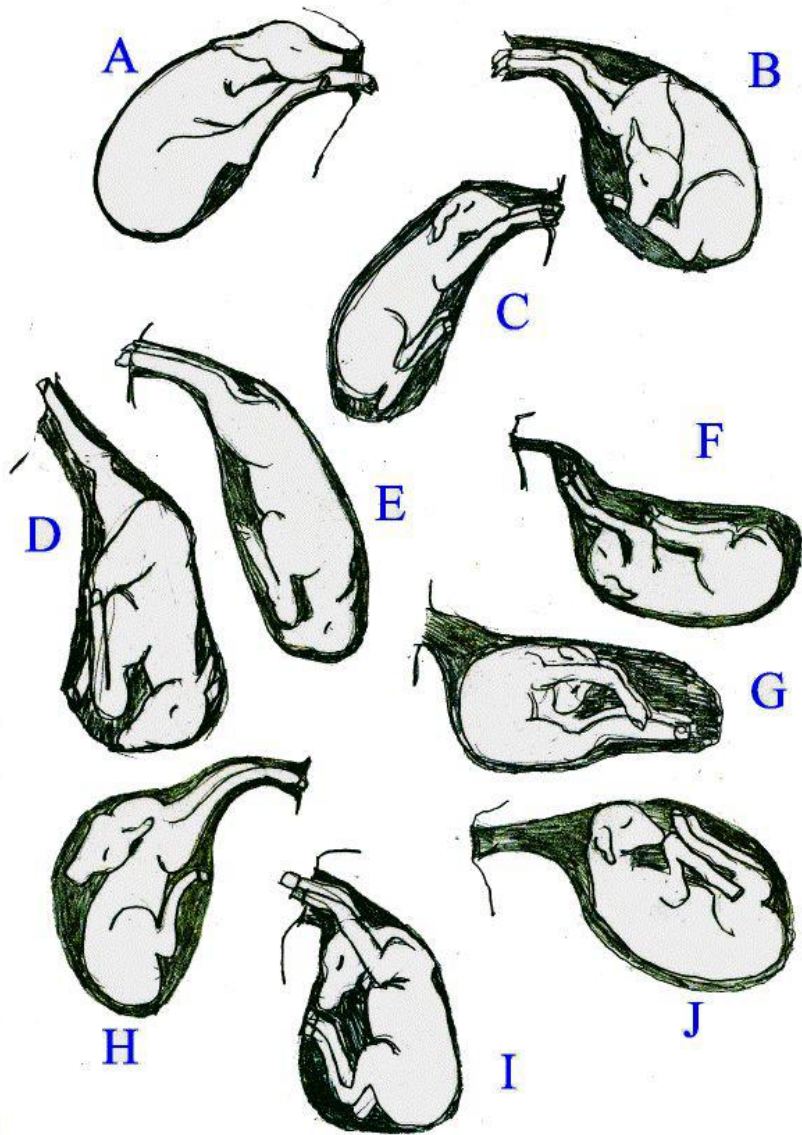
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## HEAD BACK V

Showing the correct placement of a lambing snare, behind the ears and under the chin. The v-shaped space at the front of the neck and the plastic "stem" of the snare will help hold the kid's head in place, but again, it may be necessary to use your fingertips to "lead" the muzzle into the birth canal. Ensure that at least one foreleg is in the canal as well, then use gentle, steady traction.

# Kidding Positions Continued



Here are some more examples of kidding positions.

**A:** All 4 feet coming with head, push back feet back and lightly pull front feet forward.

**B:** Head back, you most get deeply in your doe to retrieve the head, then guide it out.

**C:** Normal Position

**D:** Common Position, kid should deliver fine but once the belly comes out kid needs to be pulled out quickly so that it doesn't aspirate amniotic fluid.

**E:** Very similar to **D** and should be handled the same.

**F:** Upside down, kids can sometimes can deliver this way but may need to be rotated upright to deliver.

**G:** Back first and upside down, kid needs to be pushed back and rotated upright.

**H:** Head back, this can be difficult, you'll have to go into your doe very deep to retrieve the head, once is retrieved keep guiding it out.

**I:** Head down, you need to go in deep to retrieve the head, once head is up guide it out.

**J:** Upside down, neck first and no legs, you'll probably need to rotate this kid and then retrieve at least one leg.

# Post Kidding Care

After your doe has finished kidding there are a couple things you'll need to do check to make sure your doe and kids are set rest and bond.

- Make sure waxy plug in teat orifice is gone so kids can drink colostrum.
- Make sure you dipped kid's umbilical cords in iodine.
- Kids need to be completely dried.
- Make sure you see kids nurse or help kids nurse by setting them in front of the udder and guiding their mouth to your doe's teat.
- Give doe 1 gallon of warm water with 2 to 4 tablespoons of molasses mixed in.
- Make sure your doe has plenty of hay and water.
- Watch for signs that your doe may be rejecting kids, for example butting them away or running from them.
- If any kids seem weak or lethargic take their temperature, it should be between 101 and 103, if their temperature is low get them warmed up quickly. Also give BoSe or selenium gel to kid if they are weak, BoSe and Selenium Gel also helps with weak legs in kids.
- Watch for your doe to pass her placenta.
- Hold, cuddle and handle the babies as much as possible so they also form a bond with you.



## References Page

Page 6, Signs of Labor: <https://fiascofarm.com/goats/>

Page 6, Goat streaming discharge: <https://theorganicgoatlady.com/10-signs-that-your-goat-might-be-in-labor/>

Page 7, Ligaments: <https://fiascofarm.com/goats/prenatalcare.html>

Page 8, Giving Birth: <https://www.lifestyleblock.co.nz/forum/plant-growing-propagating-tips/540-saanen-doe-kidding-twins-pic-normal-birthing>

Page 10, Assisting Birth: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fn3TCiRYODQ>

Page 10, Assisting Birth: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-GiaMZxeE0>

Page 11, Normal Kidding Positions: <http://www.mythosfarm.com/youre-kidding---dont-panic.html>

Page 12, Abnormal Kidding Positions: <http://www.mythosfarm.com/youre-kidding---dont-panic.html>

Page 13, Abnormal Kidding Positions: <http://www.mythosfarm.com/youre-kidding---dont-panic.html>

Page 14, Kidding Positions: <http://www.thegoatchick.com/kidding-issues-dystocia.html>