

Vaginal prolapse

Causes – Treatment

Compiled by

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- Vaginal prolapses in ewes occur at **varying frequency**
 - It is costly as some times may cause lamb death
 - Vaginal prolapse is where the ewe pushes her vagina out of her vulva
 - The prolapsed vagina appears as a **smooth red mass** varying from **tennis ball to melon size**.
 - The ewe may separate herself from the mob
 - Because of the pressure around her vulva many ewes become confused and try to steal other lambs, **thinking they have already lambed** themselves.
- Occurs most commonly in the **last month of pregnancy**

- ✓ During the last trimester of pregnancy, the ewe's oestrogen levels rise, and they produce a hormone called relaxin which relaxes the pelvic ligaments and surrounding soft tissues.
- ✓ Increased abdominal pressure caused by the pregnant uterus combined with soft tissue relaxation leads to prolapse



- **Predisposing Factors**
 - Genetic Common in **Cross bred ewes & Prolapse is heritable**
 - **Old Ewes**
 - **5/5 BCS**
 - Multiple lambs
 - Lameness / increased time lying down
 - **Little exercise**
 - Diet – 1. **Oestrogenic** feeds
 2. **Bulky** diets
 - **Hypocalcaemia**
 - Short tails / Docked tails

Treatment

1. Treatment should be commenced as soon as possible to prevent further damage to the surface of the vagina.

2. Treatment depends on the size of the prolapse

- If the vaginal prolapse is only **small** and keeps self-lubricating itself by replacing itself back in the right position through the vulval opening, then **it may not need treatment**. This type of prolapse still requires ongoing close observation. . If fresh, small, and not damaged, cover with either obstetrical or a water-based lubricant and apply gentle pressure on it to replace it back through the vulva.



- If the vaginal prolapse is of **bigger** dimensions and the mass hangs out of the vulva for prolonged periods of time, then the blood flow to the vagina can become damaged with the prolapse turning **blue/black** and the surface becomes dry and very easily damaged and ulcerated. **The prolapse can also become fly struck. Proper attention is required in this case**



- a. Prevent the ewe from straining while the vaginal prolapse is replaced.
- b. Gently **clean** with warm clean water (a mild non-irritating disinfectant) to remove any debris.
- c. Check the prolapse for significant damage or any sign that the ewe has started to lamb (cervix open, lamb head/legs palpable, waterbag protruding)
- d. The urinary bladder may get flipped up inside the prolapse, blocking the bladder outlet, so you can **gently lift the prolapse up towards** the tail and this may allow the ewe to **urinate** and reduce the size of the prolapse.
- e. Apply pressure around the edges of the vulva to stop the prolapse from popping out again. **As lambing time approaches, they should be loosened or totally removed.**
- f. **Use antibiotics and anti-inflammatories / pain relievers**

If there are signs that the sheep's intestines have herniated through a tear in the vagina, then humanely euthanise as soon as possible.