



Here Comes Baby!

Yesterday morning Shebaa had a lamb!

Martok

Monday, April 5, 2010

Photos by Sue Weaver

Shebaa in March. Yesterday morning Shebaa had a lamb! Mom knew she would, so she was there to give Shebaa a hand. If you learn to read the signs you'll know when your mama animals are going to give birth too. Here are some ways you can tell.

Use an online gestation calculator to see when your mama is due, then research her species to see how long before and after that date normal babies are born. Sheep usually lamb from five days before to five days after their due dates, so Shebaa was right on time.

Shebaa the day before giving birth. Watch her udder! Most sheep and goat mamas get strutted udders (that means the udder gets full of milk and stretched almost to bursting, with teats taut and sticking out a little bit to the sides) a day or two before giving birth.

At the same time structures in her hindquarters will start to relax. The muscles beside her tail head soften and her vulva gets long and soft. Goat people check their does' tail ligaments; when they're "gone," expect kids within 24 hours. It's harder to tell with sheep but if you look at these pictures, you can see how Shebaa's body got smooshy and soft.

Shebaa's udder the day before giving birth. Sometimes friendly mamas sometimes get offish and offish ones get friendly A day or two before giving birth. Bon Bon dashed around with her ears stuck out to the sides. Shebaa baahs really loudly and really often starting just a few hours before she lambs. When a mama acts weird, it's nearly time!

Most species "nest" before giving birth. They go off by themselves and dig in the dirt or bedding with their hooves. They sometimes act as though they've already had their baby but misplaced it. ("Now where in the world did he go!")

Sometimes they talk to their unborn babies in sweet, low murmuring we call Shebaa and son "mama voice."

Finally, first stage labor begins. That's when the mama feels pain. She'll go to her chosen birthing spot and lie down, get up again, plop back down, trying to position Baby just so. She might pant, sweat, yawn, grimace, throw back her head or stick out her ears as each contraction hits, then lumber to her feet and re-position herself again.

To be continued...

P.S. Shebaa had a big white ram lamb named Fosco. He's cute! Wren's lambs are due on Saturday. Will they be girls? We can hardly wait to find out!

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