Ovine Dystocia Caused by an Abdominal Distention of the Fetus

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Ovine Dystocia Caused By Abdominal Distention of the Fetus. On the evening of February 21st, an eight year old Cheviot ewe was noticed by the owner to be having difficulties lambing. He observed that a small portion of the fetal placenta was hanging from the vulva of the ewe. His attempts to deliver the lambs were not successful. On the morning of February 22nd the ewe was admitted to the Stange Memorial Clinic as a dystocia case. The partially opened cervix was dilated manually and examination revealed that the fetus was still alive. The fetus was in an anterior presentation, dorso-sacral position, but its head was retained dorsally. After repulsion of the fetus, the abnormality in presentation was corrected. The fetal head and forelegs then passed easily through the pelvic portion of the birth canal. Further attempts to deliver the lamb by manual traction were unsuccessful. Examination revealed that the fetal abdomen was so severely distended that it was causing the dystocia. The diagnosis made was ovine dystocia caused by severe abdominal distention of the fetus. A presumptive diagnosis of fetal atresia ani was also made.

Abdominal Distention of Ovine Fetus

A partial embryotomy was considered but the idea was discarded because the clinician suspected a rupture of the uterus. A caesarean section was performed. The uterus was found to be ruptured in two different locations, resulting in severe blood loss and shock. The presumptive diagnosis of fetal atresia ani was confirmed on delivery of the fetus. All attempts to start this abnormal fetus breathing were fruitless. The fetal abdominal cavity was greatly distended and there was considerable edema in the tissues around and including the scrotum. The gastrointestinal tract was filled with a mucoid type fluid; a little meconium was evident in the fluid.

Since many of the animals that have atresia ani show no abdominal distention at birth, it might be assumed that in this case there must have been an alteration in the normal mechanism of absorption of the swallowed amniotic fluid from the fetal digestive tract. Since the fluid had no escape because of the atresia ani, a greatly distended abdomen was the result.

A second lamb which was normal but weak was removed from the other horn of the uterus. This lamb died. The ewe expired a few hours later as a result of blood loss and shock.

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Surgical Procedures
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of 200 to 300 mg. testosterone may be administered to the bull for the purpose of increasing libido. Where cows in heat are not available or the bull is unable or unwilling to extend the penis, it is advisable to pull the penis from the sheath every few days to break down adhesions that may form.

In some cases of extensive hematoma, the subcutaneous tissues and skin over the area of the swelling may be stretched to the point that when the bull has an erection the penis will bow downward just anterior to the scrotum. This results in the distal end of the penis slanting upward with the tip almost in contact with the ventral abdominal wall of the bull. Penetration of the cow may not be possible because of the unusual position of the penis. The stretching of the “penis sling” is easily corrected by the removal of a horizontal portion of skin on either side of the penis, thus preventing the downward bow of the penis in this area.

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