



THE NEW “ASK ALBERT”: STUMPED ON THE FARM

Carey Hunter, Pine Stump Farms, Omak

Help for Livestock: Mastitis

Dear Stumped,
My nanny goat just had twins. The twins are doing fine, but my goat's udder has one side that is swollen and hard. What do I do?

-Concerned and Wondering What To Do

Dear Concerned,

It's not terribly unusual for the babies to prefer one teat over another, leaving the other teat neglected and it gets engorged. I'd recommend immediately intervening with a bucket of fairly warm water and an old wash cloth, washing the udder, and milking down the swollen side. If left to itself, the swelling might subside, or it could develop into mastitis.

If the udder gets mastitis, you run the risk of ruining the production and future productivity of the nanny. You can tell if it's developing into mastitis when the udder, or that side, gets hard or the milk turns pink, which means it is being tainted with blood. As with most illnesses or maladies, it's always better and easier to prevent than it is to cure. Daily milking down the swollen side can alleviate the problem. The milk, if pink, should be discarded or fed to the dog, chickens, or pigs. Generally, in some four to six days, the situation will begin to turn around and clear up. If not, then let the malady run its course, but the recommendation is then to cull the nanny and not use her anymore as there will be scar tissue in that side of her udder. This will make her quite prone to repetitive episodes of mastitis. I have even seen that side of the udder shrivel up and fall off—interesting that the two sides of the udder can function independently that way. The nanny can conceive and have babies, but you'll be faced with bottle feeding the offspring.



Mother goat Melora with her single kid. A mother goat having only one baby leaves her prone to swelling on one side of her udder, due to a single nursing on a favorite side.

Photo credit: Carey Hunter

A NEW ALBERT?

Ask Albert is expanding its scope beyond farm machinery, to cover additional aspects of operating a farm. Managing machines is just one of many tasks rolled under the heading of “farming.”

“Stumped On The Farm” is an effort to broaden the column's perspective and convey the myriad skill areas. Albert is still on the ready to answer farm machinery questions; his partner Carey will offer answers on broader farm topics.

As always, you are encouraged to share your farm-related questions. We also invite you to be Stumped on the Farm's next guest columnist. To send a question or take a turn answering Stumped on the Farm, visit tilthproducers.org/farmerqa/. There, you will find a list of questions waiting for your answer, with a fillable form to submit your answer or question.

An ounce of prevention

I think that it's my role as their human caretaker to monitor these kinds of things and adjust the situation. When the babies are born, I check both sides of the udder and squeeze a bit of milk (actually it'll be colostrum for the first day) out of each teat to ensure that it is flowing and that the baby (or babies) will be able to nurse. Occasionally, if the udder has gotten its supply of colostrums milk already, it might be advisable to milk down the udder a bit so that the kid(s) can more easily grasp the teat and nurse. It can be frustrating to watch the newborn struggle to get a hold of a taught nipple, whereas if it is slightly flaccid it is easier for the baby to get a hold of.

Infrastructure

To make handling the nanny easier we've built nurseries along one side of the barn. The nursery greatly facilitates catching the mom or babies to check and see how things are going. For first-time moms, it also gives them some alone time to realize that indeed these babies are theirs to care for. Infrastructure merits an entire column of its own to discuss how to keep your herd well-cared for and easier to tend, move, and utilize the land.

There's a lot to keep track of when it's kidding time. Good thing the babies are doing well and hopefully, with a small intervention in a timely manner, you'll have everyone in good order shortly.

Out tending my gals,
Carey (the goatherd)

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