



Word from the Herd

Louisa Veterinary Service

Spring 2025

Grant Update

Since our last update, Dr. Melinda has been the keynote speaker at the Virginia Veterinary Conference and the Virginia Horse Council. We have also met with our Young Farmer's group, and the Greene County farmers.



Dr. Katie went to Oklahoma in February to attend another AABP (American Association of Bovine Practitioners) recent graduate conference. It is a great opportunity for new food animal veterinarians, offering a variety of continuing education, networking opportunities, and time to catch up with classmates that are practicing across the U.S.!

Despite technical difficulties, C.A.L.F. 4H members, Cloverbuds, and even parents, were engaged throughout Dr. Katie's presentation on "Being Ready for the Fair". This topic was requested by C.A.L.F. 4H at last year's fair check-in and has benefitted other 4H groups. It has been a great example on how asking questions not only helps you, but those around you as well. Keep learning y'all!





This March we offered an Advanced Small Ruminant Birthing class to experienced breeders who were looking to hone their skills.



OFFICE NEWS

With the busy spring upon us, please remember to call the office, 540-967-2974, for any scheduling needs or emergencies. The doctors do not carry their phones on them when they are working, nor do they have easy access to the entire schedule. Even if you have an emergency, it is best to call the office as we know where the doctors are scheduled to be and can get someone to you as quickly as possible.

If you have not already ordered your spring vaccines and supplies, now is the time to do so. While we do keep a limited supply of vaccines, dewormers, and fly tags on hand, knowing in advance who needs what and when, allows us to order appropriately so we will have what you need when you need it.

While it seems way too early to start thinking about what you might need for the fall, we suggest beginning a list now. This way, come the end of the summer and before your fall herd work starts, you can let us know what you need so we can be sure we have it on hand. Please be aware, some items are in short supply, or have long lead times before we can get them, so don't wait until the last minute.

🍀How to Get Your 4-H Animals Off to a Good Start

by Dr. Melinda 🍀



Well gang, it's that exciting time of year...the time you all get to meet your summer 4-H projects for the first time. These projects aren't just substantial financial investments; they are also live animals who require you to invest a lot of time and attention in them in order to be successful.

First, let me ask you to answer the question: **What is your definition of success?** This could be different for all of us. Some of you may define success as winning grand champion at the fair, while some of you consider it a successful endeavor if you manage to stay alive and not get dragged around the show ring. Before you start any project, you should always set some goals for yourself and for your animal so that you can stay on the path to success.

Hopefully most of you purchased your animals from reputable breeders or sales. When you pick your animal up, you'll need to know what they are currently eating because we **NEVER** want change a ruminant animal's diet too quickly! This can lead to an acidic rumen and make the animal get very sick. You'll also want to know what vaccinations have been given to the animal and if they have been dewormed. These are important so that you will know when to follow up with any further vaccinations or deworming. If the owner doesn't know, we assume that the animal hasn't been vaccinated, and we start them at the beginning of the vaccination series. Depending on how you house the animal, it may need to be dewormed at least a couple of additional times once you get it home.

You also need to think back to last year about what health problems your previous animals may have had. Sometimes you can use this information to help stay ahead of future problems. One example is, if you struggle every year with your heifer or steers getting warts, you may want to talk to your veterinarian about using the new wart vaccine as a preventative. You also need to make sure you're placing the animal into a very clean environment, with properly disinfected feed pans and hay racks, at least to start out.

Another example is people struggling with fungal issues in their animals, these include ringworm and club lamb fungus. If you know these tend to be a problem for animals in your barn, you may want to talk to your veterinarian about getting a shot of MultiMin or BoSe for them initially. These shots have trace minerals that will improve the immune system and skin of the animal. Again, you'll also want to make sure the environment is clean and all feeding and grooming implements are properly disinfected. Do **NOT** share grooming tools with others at a show. Please remember, health problems that are contagious to people, such as fungal diseases, are **NOT** allowed at the shows because they pose health risks to the public.

These are just a few tips to get you all off to a good start. **Good nutrition, a clean environment, and lots of love go a long way** in helping your animals stay healthy. We here at Louisa Veterinary Service are here to help you achieve success, no matter what your definition is. Please feel free to reach out to us at any point for advice, which is free to 4-Her's. The only time you'll get a bill is if we come out for a farm call.

Overview of Tips

1. Define success
2. Ask the breeder what vaccinations and deworming have been done
3. Make a list of health issues you have struggled with before
4. Reach out to your vet if you want to discuss a strategy to prevent disease or maximize production on your show animal



Precocious Udder in Small Ruminants

By Dr. Katie Lukowicz

Udder development and milk production in a doe or ewe that has **NOT** been bred is called **Precocious Udder**.

The different **causes** of it are:

- high producing milk genetics
- nutrition
- persistent CL on an ovary
- cyst or tumor on an ovary

Depending on the cause, the **treatment** is:

- monitor- it may resolve with return to estrus
- change in diet- decrease in energy (lower protein, fat, etc.) OR changing forage from legumes (alfalfa, clover, etc.) which are high in estrogen, to a grass hay
- prostaglandin- a hormone injection
- surgery to remove the ovaries

It is important that **they are NOT milked**, because this will stimulate their body to produce more milk and, in some cases, this will prolong resolution of precocious udder. You should also look out for **secondary issues** such as:

- mastitis
- discomfort/injury due to bag size
- reproductive tract infection
- infertility

It is important to monitor your herd or flock so little issues are caught before they become big problems!

Taking Control of Your Breeding Season

By Shawna Sartain VMCVM Student c/o 2025

Questions to think about:

- What species do you have?
- Natural cover (having a sire) vs Artificial Insemination?
- Healthy enough to breed?
- When is it best to breed to get the birthing date I desire?
- Signs to look for when to breed?
- Signs of birthing?

Step 1: ** Establish a Veterinary-Client-Patient-Relationship**

→ Can provide: breeding soundness exams/ wellness physicals, ER-guidance, helpful information, deem an the sire/ dam fit or unfit to breed, helpful tools, vaccines

Step 2: Production goals

- Natural cover by a sire vs AI protocol with your veterinarian
- Fall or spring breeding vs birthing date

Step 3: Species/dates

Species	Season to breed	Mature breeding age	Signs being in heat	Gestation Length
Ewe/ Doe	"Short day breeders" → breed fall/ winter *best oct-dec	Spring born puberty in fall, fall born puberty next fall OR 40-50% adult body wt	Swollen Vulva Clear discharge, male seeking, receptivity standing to be mounted)	E: 145days D: 150days
Alpaca/llama	"Induced ovulators" -	A: ~12mo LL: ~18mo 40-50% adult body wt.	+/-Increased vocalization, crush in the presence of a male	340 (+/- 5 days)
Pig	"non-seasonal/polyestrus" (can continuously breed throughout the year)	5-8 months OR 250lbs OR 40-50% adult body wt.	Swollen vulva, clear vaginal discharge, ear "pricking", back pressure test, seeks boar, increased vocalization	115days
Cow/Heifer	Fall/ Spring	~15 months OR 40-50% adult body wt.	Stands to be mounted, clear- stringy, vaginal discharge	~283 days

Step 4: Confirm pregnancy with veterinarian

- ultrasound/palpation/ blood tests
- if open: cull vs re-breed vs diagnostic workups

Step 5: "She's bred, now what"?

- Know the birthing date
- To do before birthing: quality nutrition, shelter/jug/stall towels, stock birthing tool kit (heating lamps, iodine, sterile lube, chlorohexidine solution, head snare, veterinarian phone number, colostrum replacer, OG tube and bottle w/ Pritchard nipple)
- watch for signs of pregnancy: restlessness, visualization of the waterbag from vulva or feet out, time the progression

Step 6: Mis-Mating/ Accidental breeding

- ** Contact your veterinarian to develop a plan for mis-match mating/accidental breeding ****
- ** EARLY is key to intervention ****

