

Signs of Doe Labor

Always keep in mind that every doe is an individual and every doe is different.

As much as I'd like to say to new goat owners, "This is exactly what to look for." Your doe may show any, all, or none of these signs. ALL DOES ARE DIFFERENT. There is no guarantee what your particular doe will do. You just have to learn her particularities as you go by experience and observation.

Be aware that goat midwifery is learned (i.e. presentation, position of legs, etc.) **and also** instinctive (i.e. this is taking too long, she's uncomfortable). Read, learn and be prepared, but also trust your instincts. Every situation is going to be different.

The best way to tell if your doe is going into labor is to know your particular doe and look for anything out of the ordinary.

Ligaments are "gone". Feeling the ligaments and the tail head are my main warnings that kidding may happen within the next 24 hours. Note: Ligaments have been known to "come and go"; you can't feel them at all and then they reappear. I have not had this happen very often, but it can happen.

The doe's tail head is noticeably raised. You can practically put your fingers all the way around the spine right before the tail. Feeling the the tail head and ligaments are my main warnings that kidding may happen sometime within the next 24 hours.

"Far away" look in the doe's eyes. Eyes wide. The whites of eye may get slightly bloodshot.

Pawing at the ground (making a nest). A doe can start doing this many hours before kidding: they can do this all night long only to kid in the mid morning (ask me how I know). When a doe starts pawing a lot, I keep checking on her knowing she could kid anytime, be it in 1/2 hour or 12 hours.

Laying down, getting up, laying down, getting up, laying down, getting up.... It's really hard to get comfortable when you are really pregnant and going into labor.

Long clear string of "goob" (mucous) hanging from the doe's vagina. If the goop is amber, it is amniotic fluid, and kidding should happen very soon. (Note: The doe can start having small amounts of opaque white discharge a day, a week or even a month before kidding; this is the "plug").

The doe's udder in full and tight. Some people refer to the udder getting "shiny" or "glossy"; this would be because if the udder getting full and tight, and thus the stretched skin becomes shiny. Be aware that though it is most common for a doe to "bag up" before she kids, she could wait until the last minute or even not really start "coming into her milk" until after she kids. Every doe is different.

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Note: It's always good to have [Mo'Milk Mix](#) on hand just in case the doe kids without milk or without enough milk to feed her kids. This is an herbal formula I formulated to aid in milk production in lactating animals.

The doe starts drifting away from the herd. You don't want her having her kids hidden off in the woods somewhere; you might want to go ahead and put her up in the kidding stall.

The doe becomes more vocal. If a doe is normally quiet and all of a sudden starts making little sounds, it may be a good idea to put her up in the kidding stall.

The doe may start talking to her babies before she delivers them.

The doe may do a lot of stretching and/or yawning. (see photos below) The stretching can be the doe trying to get the babies in the correct birthing positions. Stretching along with tail arching are actually contractions. I've never been able to figure out the yawning.

The doe may become more affectionate toward you. The doe may even start licking you. It is ok to let her do this. Keep in mind this does not always happen.

The doe may become more afraid of you or not want you to touch her. If the doe is "wild" she may get really wild as she gets closer to kidding. Other examples: We had a doe who was always extremely friendly but decided she did not want to be touched a few weeks before kidding. In the middle of labor, as we were assisting her, she changed back to her "old loving self".

If the doe does anything that makes you say, "Gee, she never did that before."

Acting weird. We have a doe who's *only* sign of labor is acting slightly odder than usual.