

Sheep Artificial Insemination Fact Sheet 11: Vaginal Artificial Insemination with Fresh Semen

Benefits:

- You can use fresh semen instead of frozen
- Safer and easier
- Higher success rates than with frozen-thawed semen vaginal insemination
- Ram could be collected in one part of the country, semen extended, and then shipped overnight to another place for insemination into synchronized ewes.

Negatives:

- Using fresh semen gives you fewer options for ram genetics until we have some form of progeny testing in the USA.
- Initial investment in supplies

You will need:

- A ewe in standing heat
 - Sheep vaginal speculum
 - Maglite with speculum attachment
 - Infusion tubes
 - Paper towels
 - Elevated position for sheep to stand on (show stand, loading dock), may help to have the sheep on an incline so her hind end is higher than her head
 - Extended fresh semen
 - Water bath nearby work area to keep semen warm
 - Non-spermicidal sterile lubricant
 - 3 People to: restrain the sheep, inseminate the sheep, and to draw up the semen in infusion tubes
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Stand for inseminating



Inseminating Ewe

Vaginal Artificial Insemination Steps

- Have the ewe to be bred on an elevated stand or lift rear legs over an elevated bar so that the ewe is standing fairly inverted with just her front feet on the ground (see picture)
 - Tip: If ewe is on an elevated stand: have one side of stand next to a wall or fence if ewes are not used to standing on platform as it will make them more comfortable.



Ewe prepared for VAI

- Clean vulva of the ewe with water and paper towel
- Insert lubricated speculum into the vagina at a slight upward angle
- Attach Maglite to speculum
- Find the cervix (you may need to pull the speculum back to find it)
- Meanwhile have a person draw up 1-2cc of extended semen using a syringe and infusion tube and wrap the end of tube in paper towels to maintain sterility (amount depends on concentration)
- When the cervix is found, remove paper towel from tube and syringe and insert infusion tube into the vagina
- You will not be able to pass the cervix so you must deposit the semen under a flap of the cervix
- When you have placement correct and are ready to deposit the semen, pull the speculum back a few inches to close the vagina around the infusion tube and slowly depress the syringe (2sec/cc of semen)
- When semen is in place remove both speculum and infusion tube
- Avoid moving or unduly stressing the ewe from 2 days after to 45 days after inseminating for best results

Success Rates:

- Success rates vary depending on sheep management, synchronization, breed, semen quality, and technician skill.
- Success rates tend to be around 65-75% rate of conception