



Health Preparation Prior to Fawning

There are many steps you can take in anticipation of fawning. Below are some practical ways you can actively ensure a successful fawning.

Breeding Pens

Does need to be placed in breeding pens at the least several weeks and preferably 30-60 days prior to fawning to ensure they establish a social order. Before deciding which does should go into pens together, think about their social interactions and which are dominant versus which are more submissive. Sometimes placing the more aggressive does together is best as they are able to hash out the hierarchy and establish a healthy social environment. This is where paying close attention and taking notes can be helpful. Know how your animals interact and place them in pens for optimal health and the least amount of stress prior to fawning. They need time to acclimate to the new environment and animals, especially ones they have never been introduced to before.

Conditioning and Feed

It's always important to pay close attention to the conditioning of your doe(s) prior to fawning. Healthy adult does need some body fat but not too much. Excessive body fat or over-conditioning could cause difficulties when fawning. Dystocia, a difficult birth, is not often seen in Whitetail due to multiple births, but is sometimes seen in Elk. Knowing your species well, speaking to other cervid farmers and paying close attention when the due date is nearing is important to having a healthy fawning experience. The severity or mildness of the winter season will affect the amount of fat on your cervid. Keep all these factors in mind when thinking about what to feed and how much.

Most likely you will want to feed a diet full of rich nutrients, with adequate and balanced amounts of protein, fat and fiber. If a quality commercial feed is unavailable consider a custom ration. Custom ra-



tions can be tailored to best fit your farm conditions and animal type. Always use the best possible ingredients when researching or mixing feed. Not all ingredients are created equal and it will show in your herd health over the course of time. Outside of labor costs, feed should be your largest expense by far, therefore make it the best for your money. View the Red Ridge Whitetails Feed power by Max-Rax [[C & E Wildlife](#)], with all guaranteed analysis and ingredient information.

Additionally, think about adding variety to your feed. You can look to feed seasonal fruit that may be left from a local orchard. Deer love apples and many times there are “seconds” or bruised fruit you can obtain from your local apple orchard with a heavy discount. Cervid are browsers by nature and benefit from browse (branches, leaves etc) from a maple, oak or fruit tree placed in their pasture or cut branches brought in. If you have access to fresh alfalfa and clover consider placing some in their enclosure for them to graze on. Another important aspect of feed is the addition of probiotics for your does preparing to fawn. [C & E Wildlife](#) produces probiotics for all your needs, at a minimum, including their “Farm Pack” in your regimen would be very beneficial. The Farm Pack is an all-natural micro encapsulated probiotic which is mixed into your feed and maximizes consumption, nutrient absorption and conditioning. A variety of all these feeds along with supplemental probiotics will help maintain a healthy rumen, intestinal tract and optimal health.

Worming

Coccidia are parasites that many Cervid have to contend with. There are some ways you can facilitate preventing the infection of Coccidia. This parasite causes diarrhea and can be prevented with some practical steps. First of all the more room your deer and elk have the less likely they are to contract this parasite, so overcrowding should be avoided. Also, if past farm history suggests coccidia issues may be present, administering a preventative medication in their feed or water approximately 30 days prior to fawning should assist in keeping them clear from transmitting Coccidia.

There are a host of other parasites cervid could become infected with so it is important to keep good records and have your animals on a worming schedule in accordance with you VCPR. You can choose to use injectable wormers, oral wormers or topical applications. If you suspect your does have parasites, take a fecal sample and have your veterinarian or lab analyze the sample for Coccidia and other parasites. This is a very inexpensive test and provides a target result if a parasite(s) is discovered.

Record Keeping

Good records are essential in diagnosing or noticing any problems within your herd. “The shortest pencil is better than the longest memory.” Know your animals as best you can and know their normal behaviors. In the cervid industry you would most likely use an ear tag or another method for identification. On your records you want to track their ID (official or unofficial), dates of any care, dates and dosage of any medication administered and any other physical characteristics or notes. You also need to record how many fawns they freshened and their condition upon birth. Note their udder before and after fawning to get a whole picture of how the doe performs. [Cervid Solutions Life Cycles](#) provides all the tools needed for record keeping.

Signs of Fawning

Many experienced owners can recognize the signs that their doe will freshen imminently. Many will notice the appearance of a tight belly. Their bag will drop and udder will fill, sometimes this is called “bagging up.” Udder size is different on all animals so play close attention when the expected fawning date is close. Another factor in recognizing fawning is the does behavior; she may pace or walk the fences more often than normal. Overly aggressive behavior is another signal that a doe may be close to delivering fawn(s). Pay close attention and you should have an idea when fawns will arrive.