My 3 year old pygmy goat that has never been bred and now has a cloudy discharge from the udder. Could this be a false pregnancy or something else?

A cloudy discharge from the udder indicates either she has started producing milk due to a pregnancy or pseudo pregnancy (false pregnancy), or there could be an infection in the mammary glands.

If the mammary glands are soft, not painful and are not warm to the touch, she probably does not have an infection. Mastitis or inflammation of the mammary gland usually involves only one gland or is just on one side. It is highly unlikely that it will involve both glands at the same time.

Since this doe has not been exposed to a male, she could be exhibiting signs of “false pregnancy” or “pseudo pregnancy,” and has started to produce milk.

Non-pregnant does are very sensitive to prolonged exposure to the hormone progesterone. Progesterone is produced by the ovary in response to fluid in the uterus. Pseudo pregnancy may also be secondary to elevated prolactin levels produced by the pituitary gland. This occurs when there is increasing day length in spring. Both of these conditions may predispose the doe to lactate or produce milk.

Your veterinarian can perform ultrasonography to rule in “false pregnancy” or “Pseudo pregnancy” and then the doe can be treated for that condition, by expelling the fluid from the uterus.

If the false pregnancy occurs in the early spring, you should watch the doe for a month. Some does will self correct. If the condition persists, it can be treated with antiprolactin drugs. It also helps if you reduce the amount of grain fed and feed the doe good quality hay. This will diminish production of the milk-like secretion.

The OSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital is open to the public and provides 24 hour emergency service. If you have an emergency, call (405) 744-7000.

This column is provided by the faculty of the OSU Boren Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital.

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