

Use of a small ruminant mating harness

Category

3. Minor conscious intervention

Objective

To record which females (usually ewes or does) have been mated.
To record whether males are working.

Alternatives to animal use

There are no practical alternatives.

Equipment

Ram harness

Drugs, chemicals or biological agents

Nil

Procedure

Place males in a race.

Place crayon in harness and check it is securely attached.

Adjust the straps on the harness to an approximate suitable length for the size of the animal.

Secure harness to animal making sure the crayon is correctly located on the brisket to avoid rubbing his legs.

Adjust the strap length to ensure a firm fit but not tight fit on each animal.

Release the male to the females.

At appropriate intervals, muster the animals and place in a small yard or race. Observe the rump of females for crayon marks which indicate the male has mounted the female.

Change crayon raddle at appropriate intervals as it is worn down. This will vary between males, but should be checked at least weekly by yarding the animals.

Observe the males in the paddock at least twice a week to ensure harnesses are still fitted properly and are not too loose or rubbing.

When appropriate, either at the end of the joining period or earlier, remove harness from males.

Animal Wellbeing

Wearing a harness has no impact on animals other than the restraint required to hold males while the harness is being fitted or checked, unless it is poorly fitted. Checking the fit of the harness by observation in the paddock and by closer examination weekly such that any problems can be rectified will minimise any impacts. The impact on the females is minimal, restricted to any discomfort associated with mustering and being held in a race for a short time. Handling by experienced operators will minimise any impact.

Pain Relief

Not needed. The procedure should not cause pain.

Reuse and repeated use

Harnesses are only used during joining. Depending on the needs of the investigation the length of time harnesses are worn is up to 8 weeks.

Qualification, experience or training necessary to perform procedure

Competence in handling small ruminants.
Experience in use of harnesses.