

REPRODUCTION in rams and bucks

Male reproductive tract

Sperm cells enter the **EPIDIDYMIS** which is attached to each testicle. They are stored there while they mature.

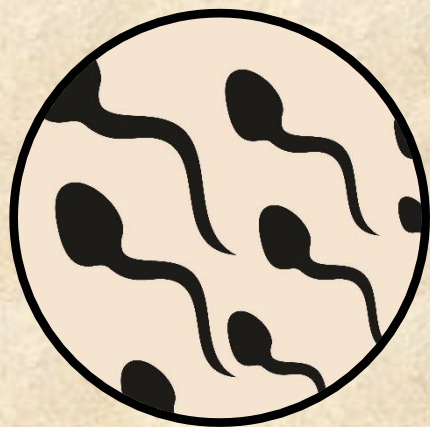
The **PENIS** deposits the semen within the female reproductive system.

The **URETHRAL PROCESS** sprays semen in and around the cervix of the ewe/doe.

The **VAS DEFERENS** is a long tube whose purpose is to transport sperm from the epididymis to the urethra. To make a "teaser" ram or buck, the vas deferens is cut or blocked.

The **SCROTUM** is a two-lobed sac that contains and protects the two testicles. It also regulates the temperature of the testicles, which must be maintained below body temperature. Scrotal circumference (testicle size) is a measure of fertility. It varies with size, age, breed, nutrition, and season.

TESTES or **TESTICLES** are paired organs which descend from the abdominal cavity to lie in the scrotum. They produce the male reproductive cell (sperm) and the male hormone testosterone. Sperm production takes 49 days. Heat stress can impair spermatogenesis. Castration removes the testicles or impairs their function.



It only takes one sperm to fertilize an egg, but there's mighty stiff competition for the honor, as the average ejaculate (~ 1 ml) from a ram or buck typically contains billions of sperm cells (1-6 billion per ml); a lot more than humans. Sperm typically "swim" upstream in clusters. They spin more than they swim. When evaluating semen, the minimum standards are >30% motility and >50% normal morphology. The presence of white blood cells in semen is indicative of disease, such as epididymitis (*B. ovis*).

