Famo feeds®

Over a Century of Innovation & Trust

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Goat Management Guide

General • Breeding • Just Kidding • Nutrition and Management • Breeds • Common Health Issues

General:

- Lifespan: 8 – 12 years
- Males are called bucks, females are called does, and babies are called kids
- Estrus cycle: 18 – 23 days
- Length of heat: 12 – 36 hours
- Gestation: 145 – 155 days
- Birth weight: 5 – 8 lbs (depending on breed)
- Puberty: 4 – 12 months
- Wean: 4 – 5 months at 30 – 40 lbs (depending on breed)
- Average body temperature: 102.5 – 104°F
- Dehorn at 3 – 5 days of age
- The fat molecules in goat's milk are 5 times smaller than those in cow's milk, which makes it "naturally homogenized" and easily digested in the stomach.

Breeding:

- Goats are typically seasonal breeders meaning does are receptive only during certain times of the year.
- Meat goats are polyestrous but tend to be more sexually active in autumn months.
- Goats may be bred year round through the use of artificial lighting to induce ovulation for off-season breeding.

- If dairy goats all freshen in a short time period, they will all also be dried off during the same time. Try breeding over a few months to ensure you'll have product year round (or close to it).
- House bucks separately to increase novelty and improve doe receptiveness.
- Ovulation may also be induced using hormone therapy.
- Flushing does (increasing amount of feed provided) should begin one month before introducing a buck to the pen and should continue through the breeding season and for 30 – 40 days after removal of the buck.

Common Health Issues:

Coccidiosis

- Goats will have runny or loose stool
- Can be prevented with Deccox® or Rumensin®

Worms

- Because goats graze they are susceptible to getting worms
- Worms can be treated with a pour-on or feed through dewormer

Urinary Calculi

- Stones that form in the urinary tract can cause blockages
- Typically seen in wethers (castrated male)
- Ammonium chloride can be added to the feed (will show up as non-protein nitrogen on the tag) to prevent formation of the stones

Pregnancy Toxemia

- During last trimester of pregnancy the developing kid may displace rumen affecting digestion of feed.
- Adjust diet to one with more energy and less fiber.

Enterotoxemia

- Occurs in young, rapidly growing animals and often results in sudden death.
- To prevent, vaccinate does with a C&D perfringens toxoid injection late in pregnancy and kids should receive an antitoxin at birth.
- Continue with appropriate vaccines as directed by your veterinarian.

Breeds:

Dairy

Alpine – medium to large size; adapt easily
LaMancha – hardy breed, best dairy temperament
Nubian – highest butterfat, lower yields
Oberhasli – medium build, 3.6% butterfat
Saanen – highest in milk yield, low butterfat
Toggenburg – milk commonly used for cheese-making

Meat

Boer – strong, well-muscled breed
Spanish Meat Goat – short, strong build
Tennessee Fainting Goats – provide both meat and fleece

Other

Angora – bred for their fleece (known as mohair)
Pygmy – bred for meat but typically raised as pets now

- Flushing increases the nutritional status of the doe causing her to gain weight and signaling to her body that she can care for multiple kids.
- Multiple births are preferred because does typically produce more milk and are more profitable.

Just Kidding:

- Goats typically have 1 – 3 kids at a time.
- Have a birthing kit handy that contains, 7% iodine to dip navels upon birth, dental floss to tie umbilical cord (if necessary), towels for drying off the baby, and soapy water to clean your hands in case you need to assist.
- If a newborn seems weak, gently insert a piece of straw into the nose to stimulate breathing.
- Keep kidding area clean. Goat kids are born with a naïve immune system and are susceptible to disease.

- Goat kids need to receive colostrum (first milk) which contains antibodies, fat, protein, and other nutrients that are critical to their survival and well-being. Ensure colostrum is ingested (either by nursing or via bottle); if the goat kid will not voluntarily drink, tube feed them (2.2 – 2.8 oz/lb of bodyweight).
- If you are raising dairy goats, remove kids shortly after birth and feed them colostrum. Commercial milk replacer is available and should be fed according to package directions.
- Once kids are a week old, provide high quality creep, developer or grower to jump start rumen development.

Nutrition and Management:

Goats are able to consume 3 – 5% of their body weight in dry matter daily. Unlike what is typically portrayed on TV, goats do not eat garbage. Overall, goats require a more nutritious diet because of their shorter digestive tracts. Their short GI tracts result in decreased digestion of feed. To overcome this when grazing, goats select for the most nutrient dense parts of the plant. With this in mind, whatever is being fed to goats needs to be highly nutritious in order for them to perform at their best. As always, provide a free choice mineral source to prevent deficiencies and free choice clean water for hydration and well-being.

Pasturing Goats

- Need large quantity of high quality vegetative forage to sustain proper intake. Goats eat less on poor pasture.
- Overall, they prefer to browse, eating woody plants over grazing on grasses and weeds.
- Goats will stand on their hind legs to reach the leaves and brush that they want.
- Because goats, sheep and cattle all prefer different forages, they can often be grazed on the same pasture and not compete for feed. However, the pastures need to be large enough to accommodate these grazers.

Feeding Grain Mix Supplements

- Even with high quality forage, either grain mix or mineral supplements may be required to maximize performance.
- In situations where grazing is not an option, there are complete feeds that can be utilized with minimal forage needed.
- Meat goats can be either grazed or fed a complete feed. Feeding a complete pellet may decrease the likelihood of intestinal parasitism and increase growth efficiency.
- Milking does require more energy and protein to sustain milk production. Supplementing at a rate of 1 lb of grain/2.5 – 3 lb of milk is recommended.
- When supplementing with a grain mix, remember to provide some forage to prevent acidosis. Acidosis is caused by the overfeeding of grain which lowers the pH in the rumen of the goat, causing digestive upset.
- Growing goats should be given either a creep or grower/developer feed. A creep will help to supplement their nutritional needs while nursing from the doe and the grower/developer will help bring them up to market or breeding size as appropriate for your production scheme.

Fencing

Goats require tight, durable fencing. Goats will chew through electric netting if not constantly electrified. Woven wire fencing is effective; however, goats' horns can become entangled and lead to injury. If using this type of fencing, check it often to free goats that are trapped. Using a 5 or 6 strand high-tensile fence with the first, third, and top wires electrified is typically an effective fence set up. Goats will also need a shelter when on pasture to provide cover during hot, cold, or inclement weather. A shed providing 10 – 12 ft^2/goat would be adequate for housing and protection from severe weather.