

Breeding and Kidding

For many goat owners, kidding time is the most exciting time of the year. But if those adorable kids are to mature into good milkers and show animals, proper planning must take place before breeding, during pregnancy, at birth and beyond.

Choose your potential sire well. Don't be swayed by a "pretty face". Know your doe's strengths and weaknesses and, ideally, pick a buck that has been proven to be strong in the areas you want to improve.

Maintain your doe's healthy diet and condition during pregnancy, not letting her get too fat or too thin. Follow your vet's recommendations for vaccinations and worming.

Kidding usually occurs 145 to 155 days from the breeding date. Attend the birth! Most does kid with no trouble but sometimes a little assistance can make all the difference. Dip navel cords in iodine and make sure the kids start nursing well either on mom or start them on colostrum from a bottle.

Follow recommendations for vaccinations and boosters, and control coccidia and parasites.

A little extra care will go a long way towards assuring a long and productive life for your new kids.



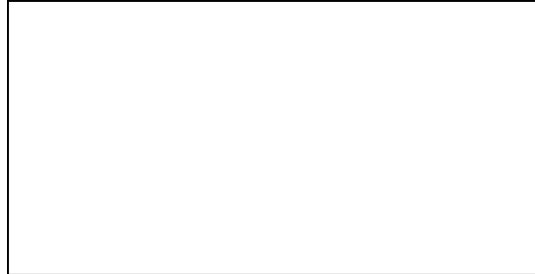
The American Goat Society

Has been dedicated to preserving purebred dairy goat herd books since 1936.

AGS is a democratic, member-run organization committed to the support and advancement of the dairy goat industry through programs such as:

DHI Milk Testing
Official Classification
Show Sanctions
Judges Training
Youth Scholarships

Contact AGS to find out more or
Contact this AGS member:



American Goat Society

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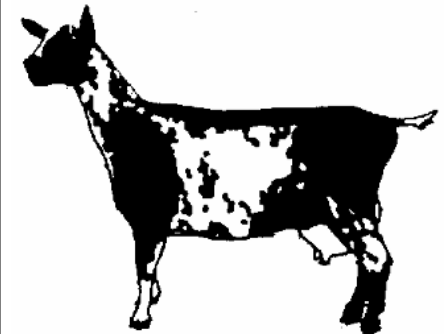
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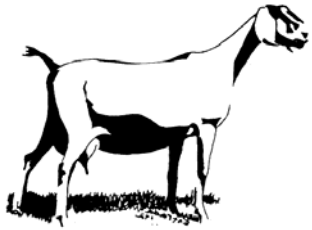
American Goat
Society
Purebred Herd
books Since
1936

Beginners Guide To Dairy Goats

Breeds
Purchasing
Housing
Feeding
Health Care
Milking
Breeding
Kidding



Buying Your First Dairy Goat



Dairy Goats come in all shapes and sizes, with 9 breeds currently recognized and registered by AGS. These include 7 standard-sized breeds: the

French Alpine, LaMancha, Nubian, Oberhasli, Saanen, Sable and Toggenburg, and 2 miniature breeds, the African Pygmy and the Nigerian Dwarf.

There is no “right” breed of goat, only the breed that is right for the owner.

Whichever breed you chose, remember that it takes as much time and money to care for a good goat as it does a bad one. Purebred, registered animals will provide a much better return on your investment than stock from unknown origins. Research carefully before you buy. If milking ability is of primary importance to you, ask to see milk records. If excellence in the show ring is your goal, buy kids that are related to animals that are proven in that area. Although it is easy to buy animals over the phone or through the internet, try to visit the farm(s) that you are considering buying from before you make a decision. Look for clean, well-maintained surroundings, and bright-eyed, friendly goats that are in good condition and free from obvious skin problems, respiratory distress or diarrhea. Ask questions about what diseases the breeder may have had and what type of preventive vaccinations and worming has been done. A responsible breeder will answer your questions honestly and directly—if you’re not comfortable with the answers go elsewhere.

Housing

Goats are naturally hardy, healthy animals, but do need at least a minimum amount of care to keep them that way. They must have shelter from severe cold, hot sun and wet weather. Barns or shelters should protect from these elements while still allowing for fresh air. Good fencing is vital for goats, both to keep them where they belong and keep predators out. At least 1500 square feet per animal is recommended, less for the miniature breeds. Overcrowding is a key factor in disease and parasite problems and should be avoided.

Feeding

There seem to be as many “proper” ways to feed a goat as there are goat owners. Generally, a concentrate (grain) of about 14—17% protein is fed, in combination with quality grass or alfalfa hay, and pasture or browse if available. Feeding programs should be adjusted to meet the needs of lactating does, breeding bucks, and growing kids. Loose minerals should be provided at all times, as well as baking soda to aid digestion. Plenty of fresh clean water is essential, and in cold weather warm water is especially appreciated. Some parts of the country are deficient in certain minerals such as copper or selenium and animals in such areas may need to be supplemented.



Health Care

As previously stated, goats are naturally hardy animals, but most breeders follow routine vaccination and worming programs for optimal health. Diseases that are commonly vaccinated for are Clostridium Perfringens Types C & D (also known as Overeaters Disease) and Tetanus.

Goats are susceptible to parasites, including intestinal parasites (worms), coccidia and external parasites such as lice. Good management practices such as alleviating overcrowding and keeping pen areas and water and feed containers clean will help, but a regular program of deworming is usually necessary. A complete body clip at least once a year in the spring not only helps keep the goats clean and comfortable, but will rid them of any lice as well.

Hoof trimming is often a neglected task, but it should be done every 1-3 months depending on rate of hoof growth. Long, ragged untrimmed toes are detrimental to both the goat's appearance and her long-term health. A sharp pair of pruning shears will make a quick job of trimming feet to their proper shape, which should resemble that of a kid's hoof.

Milking

The primary function of a dairy goat is, of course, to produce milk. A doe is normally milked twice a day, for a lactation period of up to 10 months. She is then allowed to dry off before kidding again. Goats milk is high in butterfat and more digestible than cow's milk. Many goat owners enjoy making and using the diverse products that can be made with goat milk, including soap, fudge, and many types of delightful cheeses.

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