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CARE FOR YOUR PET GOAT

Basic terminology

Learn the lingo:

Kid - a goat less than 6 months of age
Doeling - immature female goat
Buckling - immature male goat
Doe - mature female goat
Buck - mature male goat
Wether - castrated male goat
Polled – Born without horns

Fundamental Facts

Lifespan: 10-12 years, may live as long as 30 years.
Space required per goat: indoor shelter 12'x12' min. Pasture 2000sq. ft.
Goats need shelter and good fencing.
Goats are social animals and need companions.
Winter feeding: hay 2x per day from October thru April
Fresh water supply year-round.
Breeding age: females - 8 to 10 months.
Gestation period: 150 days.
Number of kids per gestation: 1 – 4.
Ruminates: goats have a 4 chamber stomach and chew their cud.

Behavior

- Goats are social animals and enjoy the company of other goats or farm animals.
- Goats can jump over 4 feet high. (Not fainting goats)
- Goats investigate everything in their environment with their mouths including: paperwork, clothing, etc.
- Goats can be trained to lead.
- Goats are avid climbers! They could climb on your car! (Not fainting goats)
- Goats chew off the bark around trees.
- They like shade on hot days and relax in the sun on cool days.
- They don't like going outside in the winter.
- Our fainting goats are more docile than the average pygmy. They don't climb or escape.

Just For Fun

Ramps and platforms. Goats like to climb and like small doghouse-like areas to rest.

Feeding For All Ages

Be sure to have fresh, clean water available for goats at all times. Winter water is very important! Tank should not be allowed to freeze. Tank heaters should be used carefully and wires protected from nibbling goats. They need hay twice per day in winter and should be monitored to ensure all goats are getting their share of food. Goats often shove smaller or more submissive goats out and eat all the food. They need good quality hay and grain concentrates if pasture is not available. Goats are browsers. They actually prefer a wide variety of plants to munch on. They will eat many noxious weeds and will strip bark off of trees.

Kids

Kids should get 8-10% body weight of colostrum in the first 12 hours of life.

Bottle feeding schedule (if an orphan kid, unable to nurse from mom):

Age	Amount	Times per day
1 - 2 days	½ - ¾ cup	4
3 - 7 days	1-1 ¼ cup	3
2 - 6 weeks	2- 2 ¼ cups	2
6 - 8 weeks	2 ½- 3 cups	2
8 - 12 weeks	Weaning time for most goats, except Angoras at 4 months.	

Wean by introducing alfalfa and grass hay into the diet gradually, starting at 1 week of age. Introduce pasture at 4 weeks of age.

Adults

Hay:

- Grass hay, usually 3% of body weight per day, have available at all times.
- Alfalfa hay is preferred but is often very rich and can be mixed or fed once a day if grassy hay is provided continually.

Grain or concentrate

- Only needed in the winter or if goats do not have access to good pasture.
- Pregnant or nursing mothers need more and should be fed separate to ensure proper amount.
- Feed small amounts of grain if needed, less than or equal to 1 pound per day.
- Important note: Goats can get VERY sick (rumen acidosis) if they eat too much grain so it is critical to store grain in goat-proof containers and not over-feed.
- Only feed grain or concentrates made for goats, for example: goat ration, goat chow, goat grain. Make sure that the grains have been rolled, flaked, cracked or crimped to insure optimal digestion.
- Horse grain or horse feed is not recommended because goats may develop an intestinal impaction.

Supplements:

- Baking soda, available as free choice (they can eat it if and when they want) to reduce rumen acidity.
- Trace mineral salt free choice. We use sheep mineral. Look for 300 ppm copper.
- Regions with Selenium deficient soil (Northeast US, Southern Atlantic Seaboard and Pacific Northwest) should supplement selenium.
- Regions with high Selenium in soil (Rocky Mountain States) should avoid supplements that contain Selenium due to the potential for Selenium toxicity.

Very Important Vaccinations

All goats should be vaccinated for:

- Clostridium perfringens type C & D toxoid vaccine Use sheep product and sheep dose (2 ml subcutaneously). Vaccinate kids at 4, 8 and 12 weeks of age, then booster annually. Booster all does one month before kidding. Booster adults annually.
- Tetanus toxoid- vaccinate annually.

Very Important Vaccinations - Consult Your Veterinarian

In areas where the following diseases are endemic, or common, goats should be vaccinated with:

- Leptospirosis Bacterin - If needed vaccinate does one month prior to breeding.
- Contagious Ecthyma vaccine - Do not use this vaccine in newborn kids or sick goats because this is a modified live vaccine and may cause disease in young and immuno-compromised animals.
- Chlamydia and Campylobacter Antigen - If needed vaccinate does one month prior to breeding.

De-worming, Parasite Control

- Adults should be dewormed every six months.
- Kids should be dewormed just prior to weaning, 3 weeks after weaning and at 6 months of age.
- It is most effective to alternate between types of dewormers.
- Three common types are Benzimidazole compounds (Thiabendazole, Mebendazole, Cambendazole, and Fenbendazole), Levamisol products, and Ivermectin (Ivomec). De-lousing:
- Apply Extabar delouser topically in the fall since lice are most problematic in the winter.
- It is important to repeat application of the delousing agent 2 weeks later to kill newly hatched lice eggs.

Hoof Health

- Goats should have their feet trimmed a minimum of once every 4 months.
- Pointed hoof shears, often call sheep hoof shears, should be used.
- Consult an experienced hoof trimmer for advice on technique.
- Simply lift up goat feet while the animal is standing, do not tip them up on their rumps like sheep.
- Remove hoof wall that has over grown the sole, shorten the toe, and level the sole and the heel.
- Use caution so as not to quick the feet which will cause bleeding and soreness.

Shelter

Adequate shelter should provide more than just rain protection. It should be clean and dry. It should be open to allow access from pasture for shade and wind protection. It should be able to be closed up for protection from winter weather. It should be large enough to allow winter exercise and if there are several goats they should be allowed to have areas where they can relax away from other more dominant goats. Platforms and pallets are preferred to insulate them from the cold and damp. Shelter should be kept clean and dry. Bedding should be maintained to prevent excess moisture that damages hooves and causes disease and illness. Daily cleaning of shelter is required. Hay should be kept dry and free of mold. Water should be checked daily and tank cleaned often.

Goats are not Sheep

This is not a silly question; some goats, particularly angoras, may look like sheep.

Goats have 60 chromosomes; sheep have 54. Fertile goat-sheep hybrids, geeps?!, are rare.

The major difference is feeding behavior - sheep are grazing animals while goats are browsers.

Goats, although very social animals, are not as flock-oriented as sheep.

Goats are more likely to seek shelter in wet weather than sheep.

Male goats will rear up on their hind legs and lunge downward to butt heads while male sheep will run at, or charge, each other to butt heads. If you mix male goats and sheep, the sheep will dominate because they don't play by the same rules and will charge the goats while they are rearing up.

Goats have an erect tail; sheep have hangy-down tails.

Most goats have beards. Sheep do not have beards.

Fencing

If there's one thing that is a definite challenge with goats, it has to be fencing to keep them where you want them! I am writing this article from first hand experience and hope to highlight a few do's and don'ts of what I have found to work and to not work. Before you rush into fencing, take into consideration a few things that may save you a lot of time, money and hard work.

Type of fencing

Area you would like to fence

Your terrain

Amount of money you have to spend

Do it yourself or hire someone?

Types of Fencing

The way I see it, there are basically five (5) types of fencing from which to choose:

- Chain Link
- Hog Wire
- Electric Fence
- Cattle Panels
- Movable

Perhaps the best method of fencing for goats is Chain Link fencing. With chain link fencing, you can be almost 100% certain that your goats will never get out. While this may indeed be the best method, there is one distinct disadvantage to this type of fencing - the overall cost. People desiring to fence in a large area for their goats to roam and browse could literally spend thousands of dollars on this type of fencing and for the most part, once constructed, it remains permanent. In my opinion, a chain link fence system would be best utilized for small pens leading into larger pastures, fenced using another method.

Hog Wire fencing is perhaps the next best method of fencing and rivals electric fencing. (Quite often, hog wire fencing and electric fencing are used in combination). Hog wire is a term used for the type of fence that has several 4" to 6" squares. While this type of fencing is also very effective, there are a couple of disadvantages to its overall use. The opening of the squares often allow for a goat to stick its entire head through the fence to the other side. If your goats are horned, quite often the goat can become stuck in place on the fence. Young kids often can wiggle through this type of fencing as well. Hog Wire fencing requires 3 basic components; the fence, t-posts and clips. Hog Wire fencing generally requires tightening as well.

Electric Fencing is perhaps the fencing alternative most widely used by not only goat ranchers, but by ranchers of other animals as well. As mentioned with Hog Wire fencing, these two types of fencing are often combined whereas an Electric Fence wire may be run at any height along the span of Hog Wire fencing to deter "fence climbing" by the goats. Electric Fencing requires a few more components; t-posts, insulators, in-line fence lighteners, 14 or 17 gauge galvanized wire, bracing (optional but recommended), ground rods (at least two (2) are recommended), lightning arrestor/diverter (optional but recommended), and a high quality electric fence charger.

Electric Fencing 101

There are two things that I highly recommend you do before you begin building your Electric Fence system; 1) get a piece of paper and sketch the perimeter of the area to be fenced (including sub pens and where you may want to have gates), 2) clear the area of where the fencing will be erected. This can be as simple as mowing a path a few feet on both sides so you can work easily within that area. The first steps of any project are materials planning and workspace and safety. I cannot stress the importance of these two factors enough.

Now that you have your plan on paper, it's time to "measure" and get the first part of your materials - the t-posts. Using a 25 foot tape measure or better, measure the length of each fence span (presuming that it will have four distinct corners. Add up the entire length of the area to be fenced in this manner. When you have accomplished this, you will need to determine what size t-post to use. It should be noted that there is a "cheaper" variety of t-posts available that in my opinion are not as durable. Be sure to get solid construction t-posts instead of the thinner type of posts. You want your fence to be strong. These solid type of posts come in a two basic sizes; 6 foot and 5 - 1/2 foot. I prefer to use the 5 1/2 foot posts simply because they are a little cheaper, and when you

are buying 200 posts at a time, .25 or .35 cents a piece can add up. 6 foot posts can be used with the same results and may be better suited to goats that are prone to jumping.

Let's say you have decided upon using 6 foot t-posts and you have a calculated fence length of 300 feet. The general rule of thumb is that you should space each post the same as the length of the posts you are using; 6 foot. Every 6 foot you will have a post. My rule of thumb differs from this slightly. I generally space each post 10 to 12 feet apart. I have had no apparent problems doing it this way although that I must say that shorter the distance between posts, the more solid your fence will ultimately be. Using the one post per every 6 foot rule, simply divide total fence length (300) by the spacing (6) and arrive at the number of posts you will need. Always get a few extra as well because you may run into unforeseen obstacles such as extremely hard ground. This said, there are two other items you will need - a pole driver and a length of nylon twine equivalent or greater than the total length of your fence.

Now that you have the t-posts and the t-post driver and twine, it's time to get to work. Locate the first corner of your fence and drive a t-post into the ground. The direction the t-post ridges are facing is somewhat important as well. I prefer to have my Electric Fence wire run on the *inside* of the goat pen. For all intents and purposes, this means that you will need to drive *all the t-posts* with the like side of the t-post facing you. The insulators I use come in many varieties and configurations, therefore it is not important. However, I prefer to drive the t-posts with the *ridged* (bumped) side facing away from the goat pen. Drive this first corner t-post only as far as so that the top of the spade is just below the surface of the ground.

With your first corner post in place*, locate the second corner and proceed in the same manner as you used for the first t-post. Follow this same procedure for each corner until all four corners are finished. Now, tie one end of the twine on the first t-post and stretch it to the corner t-post of the first span of fence. Tie it to this corner and stretch another piece of twine to the next corner and so on until you have the entire area to be fenced, outlined with the twine. This will be your guide mark for a straight fence.

*** Alternate Bracing System** The two t-posts that are on either side of the corners are very important spacing wise if you plan to use a "bracing" system (recommended). If you plan to use a bracing system, you will need to orient the face of each post in such a way that will allow you to slip a t-post brace receptacle on the t-posts perpendicular to the ground, and, hold a t-post (with spade knocked free) parallel to the ground between the first two t-posts. This type of system is recommended if you plan to use in-line fence tensioners, and will strengthen the end t-post which would otherwise be prone to bending as the fence is being tightened. This may also be accomplished by securing the corner t-post(s) to an existing structure such as a tree, house, barn etc. Anything that will allow you to brace the end of the fence when tightened.

Another alternative (and more preferred method) to using t-posts for the corner posts is a solid log such as a railroad tie that is anchored in concrete. It is crucial to remember that the corners must be the strongest point of the fence as they will be taking the strain from tightening your fence wires. If your corners are weak (and t-posts not properly braced will bend), the rest of your fence will often need retightening. In most cases, you will never get the fence wires tight enough to do enough good. The tighter a fence is, the less likely goats are to breach its boundary.

With you twine in place, it is now time to begin driving t-posts every 6 feet. I want to take a moment to stress the importance of driving in all the t-posts before beginning wiring. It is a very big temptation to drive in a span of t-posts and begin wiring. Resist the urge.

Here's wishing you happy goat ownership! We hope you have learned a little something from these pages. Please consult a veterinarian if you have questions about your goat's health.