

Goat Health and Husbandry

- Temperature = 101.5 - 103.5 - This varies depending on the temperature of the goat's surroundings
- Pulse rate = 70 - 80 beats per minute
- Respiration = 15 to 30 per minute
- Rumen (stomach) movements = 1 - 1.5 per minute
- Puberty = 7 weeks - 8 months (separate bucks from does at 2 months)
- Estrus/Heat Cycle = 17 to 23 days
- Gestation = 143 to 155 days, typically closer to 145 in Nigerian Dwarfs, but I have had does go as long as 156 days
- Life span:
 - Does = 11-12 years average age, premature death in does is typically the result of kidding. Does that are "retired" from breeding around age 10 live longer: 16-18 years.
 - Wethers = 11-16 years average age
 - Bucks = 8-10 average age - bucks usually live shorter lives than does and wethers due to the stresses of going into rut each year.
- Full growth size: Most goats do not reach their full size until they are about three years of age.

Feeding

Goats are ruminants; they have four stomachs. Their stomachs act like big fermentation vats. When you feed a goat, you are actually feeding the bacteria in this fermentation vat. The bacteria, in turn, make the nutrition in the food bio-available. A goat's rumination, or method of processing food, requires plenty of roughage and fiber to work properly. Although the goat's digestive system is similar to that of other ruminants, such as cattle and sheep, who are "grazers" and eat grass, goats are more closely related to deer, who are "browsers". As browsers, goats are designed to eat, and prefer, brush and trees more than grass.

Goats need access to high quality hay 24/7, unless otherwise determined based on nutritional needs. In the winter months the process of rumination is what keeps goats warm and it is especially important that hay is constantly available. More fibrous "stemmy" hay is perfect for the coldest winter days as it is more complex for the system to break down, thus creating more heat in the system.

Goats that are not involved in a breeding program do not need grain but can be grain trained and fed very small amounts. If feeding grain, feed only a goat specific grain or goat and sheep grain. Goats are prone to Urinary Calculi, the calcium phosphorus ratio in the feeding program must be constantly maintained at 2:1. This is especially true for wethers; maintaining this balance is crucial for health, as UC can be fatal.

Never make big changes in the way you feed a goat all at once, or feed large quantities of a new food that the goat has never had before, if you do this, you will throw off the bacteria in the goat's rumen, which can cause the goat to bloat, or the rumen to shut down. If not addressed, bloat can be fatal. When changing a goat's diet, do so slowly, to give the bacteria in the rumen time to adjust.

Goats need 24/7 access to loose minerals. Hard block minerals that could be used for horses are inadequate for goats. Sweetlix Meat Maker **NON MEDICATED** minerals are the recommended choice.

Copper: Goats need copper; sheep should not have copper. Due to this, do not feed your goats feed or minerals intended for sheep. If you do, you may experience copper deficiency health related issue with your goats. This may not show up for years, but can be a serious problem.

Kelp, food grade diatomaceous earth and small amounts of BOSS can be offered to goats in addition to regular grain rations/mineral supplements.

Hoof Trimming

How to trim a goat's hooves:

- Clean out any dirt with a hoof pick or the tips of your trimmers.
- Trim the side walls of the hoof, and the heel down so that they are even and flat with the sole of the foot (sometimes referred to as the "frog"). You may trim the sole if necessary.
- Trim slowly and carefully until you start to see pink. Once you see pink, stop, or you will cause the goat to bleed.
- Trim any excess between the two heel areas, if necessary.
- If you encounter a dirty pocket, or the wall of the hoof separating from the hoof, you need to totally trim this out/off until it is open and clean. Leave no dirt, or you risk "hoof rot"
- You're shooting for nice, relatively flat sole with no dirty pockets.

FAMACHA

FAMACHA, named with the acronym of the originator, is a measure of ocular mucous membrane color, which is evaluated with a color chart to determine anemia. Check ocular membranes at each full moon to determine overall goat health. Parasitic worms are most active at the full moon and as such it is best to check membranes at this time. This is also the most efficient time to worm goats if indicated by FAMACHA scoring guide. Always run a fecal exam to determine type and load of worms prior to worming, otherwise resistance to wormers can develop making any parasite harder to eliminate.



Rotationally pasture goats in order to eliminate parasite concerns, keep housing and bedding clean and dry and use Diatomaceous Earth in the base of bedding to help eliminate parasites. Only food grade DE should be used and it should never be applied to the top of the bedding, rather it should be spread and then topped with pine shavings. It will work its way into the bedding to help control worms, lice and mites without irritating the goats. It should never be applied directly to the goats' skin.