

# References for new goat owners

## Introduction:

Goats are intelligent, social, and hardy animals that can make wonderful additions to a homestead or farm. Whether you're raising adult goats or caring for bottle babies, proper care is essential for their health and well-being. This comprehensive guide aims to provide new goat owners with the necessary information on basic care, feeding, medication, supplements, and preparations for their goats and property.

## Preparation:

Before bringing goats onto your property, it's crucial to make adequate preparations. Here's a checklist of things to do and items to acquire:

- **Secure Shelter:** Ensure you have a sturdy and secure shelter to protect goats from harsh weather conditions. A 3 sided shelter would be a minimum as goats don't like to get wet.
- **Fencing:** Install proper fencing to contain your goats and protect them from predators. Goats are escape ninjas! Plan accordingly. Electric netting can work but must be religiously maintained, it can injure them if the electricity fails.
- **Pasture/Forage:** Provide ample pasture or forage for grazing. Research suitable forage options for your region. Find sources for your Hay and feed.
- **Supplies:** Stock up on necessary supplies such as feeders, waterers, bedding, grooming tools, and first aid kits.
- **Consultation:** Consult with a veterinarian experienced in goat care to establish a relationship and seek guidance on specific health concerns in your area.

## Basic Medications:

While it's essential to consult with a veterinarian for specific health concerns, here are some basic medications commonly used in goat care:

- **Dewormers:** Regular deworming is crucial to prevent parasitic infestations.
- **Vaccines:** Vaccinate goats against common diseases such as tetanus, Clostridium perfringens, and respiratory infections.
- **Hoof Trimming Supplies:** Invest in hoof trimmers and antiseptic solutions for regular hoof care.
- **Antibiotics:** Some vets will let you have antibiotics on hand, other will
- Have a supply of antibiotics approved for goats on hand for treating bacterial infections under veterinary guidance. Feeding Recommendations:

Goats have unique dietary needs, and proper nutrition is vital for their health. Here are some feeding recommendations:

- **Forage:** Although pasture (grass and forage) may supplement your goats diet, you will need to make sure you support their diet (esp. in winter) with high quality hay.
- **Minerals:** Offer free-choice minerals specifically formulated for goats to supplement any deficiencies in their diet.
- **Grain/Concentrates:** Depending on their nutritional needs, many goats will need some amount of grain or concentrates, especially during lactation or growth stages. While we use grain to supplement a goats diet, it can not replace forage and hay. You will always need a constant supply of hay/forage.
- **Fresh Water:** Ensure goats have access to clean, fresh water at all times. A water heater will be needed when the weather gets cold to prevent freezing.

### **Basic Physics Exam:**

A happy goat should be playful, with bright eyes, high tail and good attitude. When mature, they should poop pellets which are dark colored, firm and don't stick together. Things to watch out for:

- **Poor energy:** reduced playfulness, dull eyes
- **“Hunchy” posture w/ dropped tail and/or fluffed fur, droopy ears**
- **Clumpy dog poops or diarrhea**
- **Fever** (normal 101.5-103)

## **Feeding Schedule:**

Establish a feeding schedule based on the age, breed, and reproductive status of your goats.

Here's a general guideline:

- **Adult Goats:** Offer forage (hay and pasture) ad libitum, along with minerals and water. Keep an eye to make sure the goats are eating the hay you put out. Adjust grain or concentrate feedings based on body condition and nutritional needs.
- **Bottle Babies:** Feed newborn kids with colostrum within the first few hours of birth, followed by milk replacer or pasteurized goat milk every 3-4 hours for the first week. Gradually transition to solid feed and wean by 8-12 weeks of age. **TOO MUCH MILK CAN KILL A BABY!** They will always act hungry for more, it is critical not to let home have too much milk. There is a lot more to bottle babies, so this is very general.

## **Supplements:**

In addition to minerals, consider providing the following supplements to promote optimal health:

- **Probiotics:** Aid digestion and support gut health, especially during stressful periods or antibiotic treatments.
- **Vitamin E and Selenium:** Essential for muscle function and immune system support. Supplement if deficient in your area.
- **Baking Soda:** Offer as a buffer to prevent ruminal acidosis and aid digestion.
- **Copper:** Goats require supplementation with copper to stay healthy. Low copper can contribute to many health problems including hair, skin and other problems.

## **Property Preparations:**

Ensure your property is adequately prepared to accommodate goats:

- **Shelter:** Provide a well-ventilated shelter with proper bedding to protect goats from extreme weather conditions.
- **Fencing:** Install sturdy fencing to contain goats and prevent access to toxic plants.
- **Pasture Management:** Rotate pastures to prevent overgrazing and minimize parasite exposure. This can be very helpful at maintaining quality and output from your pastures.
- **Safety Measures:** Remove hazards such as sharp objects, toxic plants, and accessible chemicals from the grazing area. Goats can, and will, get into whatever trouble they can find.

Here are some additional resources

- Facebook “Goat emergency team”: This group has a plethora of downloads (much easier to navigate on a computer) covering all manner of goat illness and wellness issues. However, many people post ridiculous and/or disturbing questions...be wary before you follow this group, it really can be difficult to read some of them.
  - Here are some links to good resources from their page
    - <https://www.facebook.com/legacy/notes/2691424607564322/>
    - <https://www.facebook.com/legacy/notes/2944942388879208/>
    - Five Point Check and FaMacha Tools <https://www.facebook.com/legacy/notes/2704002862973163/>
    - <https://www.tennesseeatgoats.com/>
    - <https://www.scahealth.com/home> (Copper bolus)

Places to buy supplies:

<https://www.premier1supplies.com/>

<https://www.jefferspet.com>

<https://www.tractorsupply.com>

Buy list/checklist:

- Hay
- Grain
- Hay bag or hay feeder
- Buckets for water (or automatic waterer)
- Goat minerals
- Baking soda (buy in bulk or at feed store, not at grocery store)

- Shelter
- Fencing
- Hoof trimming shears
- Probios
- Thermometer
- Copper bolus and small balling gun (we may be able to sell you some)
- Baycox and syringes
- ...still in progress