

PREPARING FOR THE BREEDING AND KIDDING SEASONS

Caprine Outing - October 12, 1996
Mary C. Smith DVM
Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853
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1. Decide when and why goats are to be bred.

- a. Goats usually come into heat from August to March, and especially October to December.
- b. Stick to the natural breeding season until you have a lot of goat experience. Getting your goats to breed in the period of time from March through July can be challenging.
- c. Sale of meat kids? Know dates of religious holidays such as Easter, orthodox Easter, Ramadan. Consult <http://www.esmga.org/html/ethnic_calendar.cfm> for a calendar of these holidays. Know desired body weight for your customers, how long it takes a kid to get that big. Remember pregnancy lasts 5 months.
- d. Year round milk supply for commercial dairy herd? Avoid breeding all does on first heat of season, or they will all be in late lactation (not much milk) or dry (no milk) at the same time.
- e. If births can't be supervised, plan for parturitions when weather will be moderate.
- f. Sometimes a doe producing milk for family consumption can be milked through a second year without kidding. This is more likely to be true if she is a very high producing milker.
- g. If your doe is being raised as a pet or fiber goat keep in mind that you don't HAVE to get her bred, especially if slaughtering excess kids is not (yet) acceptable to the family.

2. Verify the doe is suitable for breeding.

- a. Good conformation, including strong legs, two teats, desired breed characteristics.
- b. Not an intersex goat, with some male and some female characteristics. An intersex (hermaphrodite or pseudohermaphrodite) is often the result of mating two naturally polled (hornless) goats but sometimes it is a freemartin, which is a female whose development in the uterus was influenced by a male littermate.
- c. Freedom from acquired problems:
 - Mastitis
 - Arthritis
 - Poor teeth
 - Inability to maintain normal body weight with normal feeding
- d. Above average for production traits (milk, kids, kid growth, fiber characteristics)
- e. Good body condition - not too fat or too thin.
- f. If she has a heavy worm load or has skin issues such as lice or mange be sure to deworm her or treat her for lice and mange before trying to get her bred. Some dewormers and pesticides may cause miscarriages in goats in early pregnancy.
- g. Feet trimmed.
- h. Up to date on her tetanus and enterotoxemia vaccinations and possibly for vaccines for

other diseases that your veterinarian indicates are important in your situation.

i. Vitamin E/selenium supplement if not already part of her daily diet.

3. Attend to the buck.

a. Good conformation, of the desired breed.

b. Reproductively sound - two normal, large, freely movable testicles and a normal penis and sheath.

c. Good body condition (bucks will lose weight during breeding season).

d. Dewormed, delused etc. if necessary, up to date on vaccines. Trim the feet before the buck get stinky!

e. Within a goat-proof enclosure until the chosen time to breed does.

4. Proper care during pregnancy.

a. Feed good quality hay, off the ground. Usually should feed 10-20% more than the goats will clean up in a day, replace leftovers with fresh hay.

b. Feed grain as required by hay quality. Usually need a pound of grain a day during the last month of pregnancy, to provide for the growth of multiple kids. Provide adequate dietary protein.

c. If the pregnant doe goes off feed, check at once for ketones in the urine, a sign of pregnancy toxemia.

d. Provide clean, unfrozen water, preferably continuously but at least twice a day.

e. Trace mineral salt (preferably with selenium) free choice.

f. If pregnant goats are not properly fed the kids will be weak and there will not be enough colostrum produced.

g. Clean dry bedding, well-ventilated housing. Goats tolerate cold if properly fed but are miserable if wet and get pneumonia if barn closed up tight.

h. Avoid stress, especially in late pregnancy when may cause abortion.

i. If at all possible, do not introduce new goats into the herd in late pregnancy (diseases, abortion diseases, stress from establishing a new social order).

j. Keep cats with young kittens out of the hay and grain, to avoid toxoplasmosis abortions.

k. Stillbirths and abortions - Save kid and placenta, call your vet if abortions occur. Separate a doe that aborts from the rest of the herd - it may be contagious. Wear gloves when handling the fetus or placenta - it may be contagious to people (zoonotic).

5. Prepare for the birth of the kids.

a. Choose a veterinarian who enjoys working with goats and keep the phone number handy.

b. Keep track of the due dates if hand mated, watch closely if group mated.

c. Have supplies on hand: mild soap to wash up doe if internal examination necessary, sterile lubricant, plastic gloves to protect doe and person from infections, penicillin for does with dystocia or retained placenta, tincture of iodine to dip navels, towels to dry off kids in very cold weather, stomach tube and dosing syringe.

- d. Store extra first milking colostrum in the freezer. Plan on feeding an ounce per pound every 8 hours the first day if bottle or tube feed.
- e. If on a caprine arthritis-encephalitis (CAE) eradication program, tape the teats of the does and remove the kids before they can nurse, to be reared on heat-treated colostrum and pasteurized milk or good quality (at least 20% fat, 20% protein) milk replacer.

6. Know the signs of parturition, when and how to help the doe.

- a. The ligaments around the base of the tail get very soft just before birth. If these ligaments can't be felt at all, the doe will usually kid within 12 hours.
- b. The vulva and the udder enlarge, but goats can fool you! Nonpregnant goats can make an udder and some does don't bag up until after the kid is born.
- c. The doe likes to get off by herself to kid.
- d. Once hard labor begins or the amniotic sac (water sac) appears, the kid should be born within 30 minutes. If not, examine her internally.
- e. Be clean, be gentle, and use lots of lube.
- f. Kids can be born front feet first or back feet first. Tail first, front feet without a head, and two kids trying to be born at the same time will require help from an experienced person.
- g. A medium sized kid can often be delivered safely with one leg back.
- h. The second kid is usually delivered within 30 minutes after the first.
- i. If the doe is to rear her kids, leave them together in a clean dry pen.
- j. Be sure the doe has water (may like it warm) and hay.
- k. Check the kids several times a day to be sure they are active and have full tummies. Hunched up or cold kids need help. Check the kid's temperature if it doesn't act normal. Tube feed with warm milk if the body temperature is below 99 °F but kid is still able to hold head up and swallow. Then warm up the kid. – Note: a weak chilled kid at birth will need to be warmed up first and then tube fed but the reverse is true of a kid that is suffering from starvation after the first day of life.
- l. A kid coat made from a wool sock or sweatshirt sleeve is safer than a heat lamp in cold weather.