

Capriola's ~ Quality Registered Nigerian Dwarf Dairy Goats

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* Basic Goat Health Care *

This information has been compiled as general reference only. I am not a veterinarian, and this information is not intended to replace professional advice. I disclaim all liability in connection with the use of this information and offer no guarantees of its effectiveness.

One of the best things to do before purchasing goats would be to find a good "goat vet."

Goat Terminology:

Doe = mature female goat Buck = mature male goat Kid = baby goat Wether = neutered male

Your new goat needs another goat for companionship. Goats are herd animals and are very unhappy without at least one other goat for friendship. Lonely goats are often loud and just generally very unhappy. Besides, there is nothing more enjoyable than watching two goaties playing together. ☺

Goats are usually quite stressed when moving to a new home. They may cry a lot and not eat so much but are typically settled in after the first week or two, if not sooner. We like to give our goats immune boosting herbs, probiotics, Nutri-Drench, and "Rescue Remedy" during this difficult time.

Housing

Shelter from wind and rain and a dry place to sleep is essential for goats. On rainy days, most goats will not venture outside and must be fed inside. The shelter must be draft-free but well-ventilated to prevent respiratory problems.

Secure fencing is a must for goats as they are known to be good "escape artists". We recommend fencing at least four feet high, preferably five feet. The majority of our fencing is the 5 ft. "No Climb" Horse Fencing, this works wonderfully.

We do not recommend tying goats on ropes or chains. This is very dangerous and most goats will end up eventually strangling themselves. Tying goats also leaves them open to predators and dogs. We never leave our goats tied out. I would only do this if I was right near the goat(s) the whole time they were tied out.

Feeding

Goats are browsers and are happiest when they have a wide variety of trees, brush, grasses, weeds, leaves, etc. to munch on in their pasture or wooded area. Since goats like to eat a variety of plants, it is important to keep them away from your garden or plants you do not want eaten.

For the goats' safety, it would be wise to remove any poisonous plants. Two very common plants that are very toxic to goats are Rhododendrons and Azaleas. For a more complete listing of poisonous plants, please contact your county extension office or visit this website: <http://fiascofarm.com/goats/poisonousplants.htm>

While goats have the reputation of "eating everything in sight" this is actually quite untrue. Goats are actually very picky eaters. Goats usually do not eat or drink anything that has any trace of manure or urine on it. Goats need to have their grain put in dish or feeder so it is not soiled. Hay should be in a tub, wooden box, hay feeder, or something to keep it off the ground. Feeding in this way will also greatly reduce any parasite problems.

Never change the diet of a goat quickly or you may end up with a dead or very sick goat. Many goats will eat

grain until they kill themselves so be sure they do not get into the grain bucket. Be aware that moldy hay could kill your goats.

Growing animals, does in late pregnancy, and lactating does often require grain in addition to their quality grass hay and/or alfalfa. We often give our growing does $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 cup of grain a day. Does in late pregnancy (the last 6 weeks) receive up to 2 cups of grain. Lactating does receive 2-4 cups of grain depending on their production. Heavy milkers receive closer to 4 cups.

Mature wethers and dry does (not milking) typically do not need much grain. We give our dry does about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of grain, as a small treat. For health reasons, wethers should not be fed grain after one year of age. You should be able to easily feel a dairy goat's ribs but not see them through the hair coat.

A commonly fed grain is COB (corn, oats, and barley). However, this is quite low in protein and growing, lactating, and does in late pregnancy need a grain with more protein. Many feed stores sell a higher protein grain for dairy goats. We often mix our own feed. If you would like our grain recipe for milking does, please ask and we will share it with you. ☺

Always provide a source of minerals that includes selenium (Se). Sweetlix and Purina companies make an excellent, palatable mineral specifically for goats. Do not feed sheep minerals as they do not contain enough copper.

Goats should receive free-choice quality grass hay when pasture and browse are not available. Our goats receive about 1/2 lb. of premium alfalfa hay in the winter months. Growing kids and lactating does usually need more alfalfa hay for added protein and vitamins. Wethers need only a mixed grass hay, no alfalfa.

Health Care

Goats typically need their hooves trimmed every 8-10 weeks. We use "Shear Magic" hoof trimmers from Jeffer's Livestock Supply. (www.jefferslivestock.com)

Internal parasites are common in goats. Regular fecal testing and a good de-worming schedule is very important to their health. There are many different types of de-wormers, both chemical and natural. Fiasco Farm has a listing of different de-wormers and the recommended dosing for goats: <http://fiascofarm.com/goats/index.htm> - Please see your veterinarian for other recommendations.

We have chosen to not vaccinate our goats anymore. We have noticed our goats are much healthier and happier. Should you choose to vaccinate we recommend giving kids their first CD&T vaccine at 9-10 weeks and follow up with a booster 3-4 weeks after. CD&T boosters should be given yearly after that.

Most of the northwest is deficient in selenium so we supplement our goats with selenium twice yearly. We currently use a selenium w/ vitamin E paste that is given orally.

Watch out for lice on your goats. If a goat is fond of itching itself, it most likely has lice. But don't worry, it is species-specific and you will not get lice from them. Most feed stores carry a lice powder that you can dust all of the goats with.

The normal rectal temperature for a goat is 101.5 - 103.5

Sick goats often have their hair fluffed out, stand with their head down, and body hunched up. If you have a goat with a high temperature (104 or higher) and not eating then you have a sick goat and it is best to contact your veterinarian.

All of our goats are disbudded and we highly recommend disbudding kids at a young age. We do not disbud our kids but pay for someone with much more experience to do so.

There are many options for castrating buck kids. We use the rubber-banding method as it is quick, bloodless, and the kids aren't uncomfortable for very long (my aunt likens it to them wearing a pair of "tight underwear" for a short time ☺). Most of our buck kids are banded and sold as wethers. Bucks, when mature, are smelly and often difficult to handle, they do not make good pets.

This was only a brief overview of basic goat care. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or concerns regarding your new goats. We love to stay in touch with our customers and look forward to hearing from you! Thank you for purchasing goat(s) from us!

Helpful Goat Care Websites:

<http://www.thegoatspot.net/> - Goat forum where you can ask questions. Everyone on there is very helpful! I am a member of this forum and find it very useful. My username is capriola-nd. ☺

<http://www.goatbeat.net/index.php> - Another "goat forum" to ask questions. I especially like visiting this site if I have a medical question. A lot of helpful people, especially in that area.

<http://fiascofarm.com/goats/index.htm>

<http://www.dairygoatjournal.com/>

<http://www.jefferslivestock.com/> - Where we purchase most of our goat supplies

www.caprinesupply.com - Goat Supplies