

## New Goat Owners Care Tips

*Congratulations on your new goat and thank you for buying from us. We know you will just love having goats.*

*To help you get started, here are some things we have learned over the years that you might find useful too. We are not vets and the tips below are no substitute for the advice of a medical professional but are just to help you get familiar with your goats and their needs.*

**Bringing your goats home**

Goats should be transported in a closed vehicle, out of the wind. If the trip is going to be more than an hour, it is a good idea to stop the vehicle for ten minutes or so to let the goat regain some orientation, stand up, use the restroom, and stretch before continuing. If possible, leash the goat and allow it to walk around outside the vehicle as well.

Going to a new place is stressful, and stress can cause a goat to become ill. From time to time, goats get something called "shipping fever", especially when they are in a vehicle for a long time but it can happen even on short trips too. Some people recommend giving new goats a dose of Goat Nutridrench or giving an injection of either Hoegger's Goat Serum Concentrate or a product called Bovi Sera available through many livestock supply companies (we use Nutridrench and have never used the injections but many say it prevents the illness altogether). Watch your goats carefully for a few days after arriving at their new home and if you notice any signs of illness, call a vet.

When your goats get home, put them into their new environment and allow them to explore it. After they have gotten over the initial shock of being in a new place, make sure to show them where the water and food is-or- if they are bottle feeding, offer them a bottle (if they don't finish the whole thing at first, do not worry-they are probably nervous and will do better once they get hungry again). To get them used to you, sitting in their enclosure and allowing them to approach you is the best bet --- pursuing them can frighten them and add to the stress of the move. Even if they seem scared at first, be calm and just let them take it all in and before you know it, they will be jumping happily each time they see you.

One thing we learned from our own experience is that if the goats are going to have a large space in which to play, it is better to start them off in a smaller part of that space while they adjust to you and the new home. We put our new goats in a pen, separate from the rest of the goats but still visible to them. Then we spend as much time in the pen as we can for a few days, just letting them be close to us and get to know us as their caregivers.

If you have young children or pets, wait to introduce them until the goats have settled in for a few days. Then make sure to do so calmly so as to make sure they are not stressed. Our goats have been around young children and other animals but it is always good to go slow to develop trust. If you have a dog, make sure to hold the goat and have someone else bring the dog to the goat, and firmly show the dog that the goat belongs to you and is not a toy or prey. Our dog is in with the adult goats from time to time, and we had to train her to not chase them and teach her that they are not to be harmed. While she is obedient, we still never let her in with the babies because we know she might play too roughly with them. Some dogs can be trusted around goats and others cannot-again, take it slow and don't put your goat into a situation in which they might get hurt or chased.

## Caring for young goats

### *Bottle Feeding*

We start all of our kids on the bottle immediately after birth. They are given their own dam's colostrum and milk for about the first two weeks and are gradually shifted over the course of 3 or 4 days onto whole cow's milk (we mix it in with the goat milk in increasing amounts until they are just drinking whole cow milk). Some people use powered milk replacer and have had success but others, including us, have had issues with scouring (diarrhea) as a result and have had better results with whole cow's milk.

Warm the milk as you would for a human baby. Microwaves vary in how quickly they heat--we turn ours on for 3-30 second intervals, each time opening the microwave to swirl the milk so it doesn't get so hot at the top as to warp the bottle or scald the milk. We do not recommend feeding a bottle cold and kids may not drink it if it isn't warm enough for their taste. After feedings, immediately drain and rinse out bottles with hot water until they can be either run through a dishwasher or thoroughly scrubbed---milk residue spoils fast, is hard to remove, and should a bottle not come clean, it should be discarded.

Kids on a bottle usually drink milk for the first 8-12 weeks of their life (if they are a healthy weight and are eating solids well, we stop at 8 weeks).

For the first few weeks, we give them a 6-8 ounce bottle 3 times per day, spacing out the feedings as best as we can (usually before leaving for work at 6, when we get home at 3, and then before bed at 8). We gradually increase the amount to match what the kid will drink, but never offer more than 12 ounces per feeding (too much milk can cause diarrhea as can making any diet changes too quickly).

We begin to offer hay and goat feed at one week, encouraging them to try it. By three weeks we like to see them start nibbling at it on their own.

At week 7, we assess the kid's weight, size, and how well they seem to be eating hay/feed and drinking water. If they eat and drink well and have tripled their birth weight, we begin weaning by cutting back to 2 feedings a day and increasing their hay and feed a little to compensate.

At week 8, if cutting back to 2 bottles went well and the kids are eating the increased amount of hay and feed, we cut back to one bottle per day for the week and then quit bottles at the end of the week. They may cry and put up a fuss and yell for you to bring them a bottle, but if you are sure they are ready for weaning, do not give in.

\*\*\*If a kid refuses a bottle but seems fine, do not worry but if they refuse more than one, they might be sick and you might want to call a vet.

\*\*\*If a kid becomes weak, is acting unusual, and feels "sloshy" they may have "Floppy Kid Syndrome" or the beginnings of bloat. Stop feedings and seek treatment quickly.

\*\*\*Runny poop is not good and can be caused by several things. If your goat is scouring, stop feeding milk and seek treatment.

\*\*\*Be careful in choosing a goat feed. First, be sure to use a feed that is designed specifically for goats. Also, though your goats may like them, sweet feeds contain molasses which is high in sulfur and has been connected with issues such as polioencephalitis (goat polio).

\*\*\*After weaning, goats need mineral supplementation. Loose minerals made for goats are a great option, as are soft mineral blocks. Do not use a hard mineral block, a sulfur block, a salt block, or a mineral designed for sheep or other animals.

### Common illnesses and treatments

There are many illnesses out there that you may never encounter and some that you probably will. Working with a good vet, finding a mentor, and reading books or reputable websites will help you to learn more about your goats' medical needs. As soon as you get a goat, you need to **locate and make an appointment with a goat vet** so as to establish a relationship. Not only is it important to have a vet to help with basic care from the start, in the event of an emergency, it is against the law in some areas for a vet to get involved or write prescriptions without a prior relationship.

Coccidiosis, a very common problem in young kids, are parasitic protozoa that while normally present in small numbers in goats, can overrun and kill a kid whose immune system is just building. Some of the many medications available are used for prevention, some for use when there is an issue, and some for both. We use Di-Methox 40% because it is an effective and safe preventative and treatment and we strongly recommend having it on hand even before bringing your goats home. It can be ordered in liquid or powdered form from online supply stores such as Jeffers.com and may be available from your local farm store (TSC does not carry this but does carry some treatments that we have not found to be very effective in prevention and they cannot treat coccidiosis once it has developed so we have stuck with what we know works). We use the powdered version because it is cheaper and can be stored dry until needed).

If you chose to do as we do, this is how we mix, store, and use it:



For the 40% per ml strength that we want, we do as follows (again--we are not vets and while this is what we do, it is best to work with your vet when dealing with any illness):

Prepare the mixture and begin preventative treatment when the goat is 21 days old (this is the prime age for issues with coccidia). Your goats will probably gag and act like you are trying to kill them because this medicine is bitter—in the long run though, a few minutes of bad taste will be better than the horrible illness or death that can result from coccidiosis.

- Get a clean, glass jar that has a screw on lid.
- In the jar, mix the packet with 1 cup clean, cool water.
- Weigh your animal as accurately as you can.
- Orally administer 1 ml per 5 pounds of your animal's weight on day one of the five day treatment.
- Then for the next 5 days, administer 1ml per 10 pounds.
- Store the jar in the refrigerator. The solution will likely separate and should be warmed to room temperature and stirred for it to dissolve again prior to use.

Enterotoxemia and Tetanus are also common problems in goats but because most people vaccinate with CD&T to prevent these issues, they probably won't happen to your goats so long as you keep up on their vaccinations. Usual practice is to give CD&T to pregnant does prior to kidding, to kids between 1-4 weeks of age and then again one month later, and then either once or twice per year (we vaccinate once per year but there is some evidence that the vaccine's effectiveness wanes prior to a year so we might change our practices as more research is done).

Parasites, both external and internal, are another common challenge and again require the help of a vet. For years, the practice was to just give dewormers on schedule, whether they were needed or not and without checking to see what kind of parasites a goat was hosting in order to choose the correct medication. The result is that the U.S. has parasitic worms that are resistant to the available medications and farmers are struggling to keep worms in check in some areas. The most responsible way to treat for parasites is to have a fecal test run by a vet to see what kinds of worms you are dealing with, if you even need to treat (unless they are overloaded, it isn't necessary), and what medication should be used to treat that kind of worm. Testing is not expensive and makes more sense than giving a medication that may not even treat the parasites that the goat has.

DO NOT give just any dewormer and hope it makes an impact and DO NOT give dewormers on a schedule. We test at least once per year or more if we suspect a problem. We also have does that have recently delivered tested as this can be a time during which a "parasite bloom" may occur due to pregnancy and kidding stress and the associated hormone flush. Again, however, do not give a medication without first testing. This is one topic that definitely requires more reading and researching and time to understand fully.

If your goat has a fever (above 102.5), isn't eating, has scours, or is not acting as it would normally, consult with a veterinarian to help you treat your animal. It is best to have a relationship with a vet prior to an emergency and because of the laws they are held to, they may not be able to prescribe you with necessary medications if they have never provided you with services prior. Arrange to have a visit with your vet when your animal is healthy for a check-up and ask them to go over things like what to watch out for and what to do if your goat does become ill.

Bloat can kill a goat very fast and knowing what it is, how to prevent it, and how to treat it is important. Eating too much and/or eating the wrong thing (chicken feed for example), can cause bloat. If your goat's left side is bulging, they seem in pain (lying down and won't get up, grinding teeth, standing awkwardly), suspect bloat and seek treatment quickly. There are many suggestions online for what one should do, in addition to calling a vet, if your goat has bloat and we recommend doing some research to learn more about what can cause bloat and what you should have in your medicine cabinet to treat it if it happens.

**Resources**

*Having a few good books around and being familiar with some good goat websites will help you to take care of your goats. Here are some that we have found to be useful.*

Books

Raising Goats for Dummies  
Storey's Guide to Raising Dairy Goats  
Goat Medicine

Web sites

BackYardHerds Forum	<a href="http://www.backyardherds.com/forum/">http://www.backyardherds.com/forum/</a>
Fias Co Farm	<a href="http://fiascofarm.com/">http://fiascofarm.com/</a>
Kinne's Minis	<a href="http://www.kinne.net/articles.htm">http://www.kinne.net/articles.htm</a>
Merck Veterinary Manual	<a href="http://www.vetmanual.org/mvm/index.jsp">http://www.vetmanual.org/mvm/index.jsp</a>
Cornell Guide to Plants Poisonous	<a href="http://www.ansci.cornell.edu/plants/">http://www.ansci.cornell.edu/plants/</a>
Valley Vet Goat Supplies	<a href="http://www.valleyvet.com/">http://www.valleyvet.com/</a>
Hoegger Supply Company	<a href="http://hoeggerfarmyard.com/">http://hoeggerfarmyard.com/</a>
Jeffers Livestock Supplies	<a href="http://www.jefferspet.com/">http://www.jefferspet.com/</a>