

Goats are very intelligent and inquisitive animals that make excellent pets and are also kept for commercial purposes such as milk, meat and fibre production. They have some unique attributes that need to be considered when caring for them.

HOUSING

Fences: Goats can be difficult to contain as they can jump high and will walk up stay posts in fence lines. Electric fences can be useful.

Shelter: Goats are very susceptible to the cold. They need to be provided with a good shelter that has a roof overhead to protect from rain and walls to give protection from the wind. This is especially essential for short-haired dairy breeds.

Wethering: You need to provide protection from climatic extremes and predators (dogs, foxes etc), and also have food and water available. The site should be flat, well grassed have some shade and also shelter from wind, and not have any hazards (roads etc) in range. A wide neckband should be connected to a 360° swivel, with another 360° swivel at the ground anchorage.

The goat should be inspected at least twice daily and the site changed daily.



DIET

Goats are naturally browsing animals, not adapted to grazing pasture. They will eat to a height of about 2 meters and enjoy prickly weeds such as thistles and blackberries. They will graze young pasture. They have high-energy requirements, particularly in winter.



They are very efficient at water conservation and do not always need to drink everyday. They are however, very sensitive to water quality.

FOOT CARE

Keep an eye on your goats feet, some goats may require regular foot trimming.

Footrot: Goats get a different strain of foot rot to sheep, so despite the rumours it cannot be transmitted between species. Goats don't cope well with lameness so the problem needs to be addressed quickly.

LICE

Goats can get lice, like most other animals. Lice are also species specific, and are not transferred between sheep and goats. Goats should be treated with a lousicide every 12 months, or whenever you notice a problem. *Nucidol*® and *Di-Jet*® are both registered for use in goats. Be careful to follow all safety directions and apply the product according to the manufacturers directions.

DIARRHOEA

Diarrhoea is probably the most common disease in goats. Causes of diarrhoea include worms, coccidiosis, enterotoxaemia or Johnes disease.

Worms: Goats are very susceptible to gastrointestinal worms, particularly during lactation. Young kids and debilitated animals also have increased sensitivity to worms. Faecal egg counts are very useful for monitoring and detecting problems.

Have faecal egg counts (FECs) performed 3-4 times a year and treat when necessary. Alternatively you can treat every 6-12 weeks depending on your risk status (discuss this with us). Worming based on FECs means that you don't treat unnecessarily which can save you money and reduce long term resistance to pesticides. There is already some resistance to chemical wormer, although ivermectin still has very good efficacy.

Other strategies you can employ to reduce the worm burden include:

- Good husbandry and nutrition can reduce the effect of worms.
- Reduce your stocking rate to reduce pasture contamination
- Cross grazing with cattle over 2 years can also reduce pasture contamination.

NB. Worms can be spread between goats and sheep.



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Coccidiosis: This is mainly seen in kids, often in association with worms. The organism requires moisture to develop so sanitation is important. Have food and water troughs elevated so they can't be defecated in and do not allow water troughs to overflow.

Maintaining good general health and avoiding stressful conditions will reduce disease (i.e. provide shelter and avoid long yardings).

Enterotoxaemia (Pulpy Kidney):

This disease is caused by a type of clostridia. It can be rapidly fatal, particularly in young animals. It is easily prevented with regular vaccination. Goats should be vaccinated with *Glanvac*® at least every six months. *Glanvac* will also protect your goat against caseous lymphadenitis and tetanus.

Johnes Disease: This disease is very important to the cattle industry, with many commercial dairy herds implementing strategies to eliminate the disease. Most goat herds, particularly dairy herds, carry the disease. Often goats get the same strain as cattle; so it can be transmitted between species. It is difficult to detect carrier animals, so if you run cattle and don't want to risk introducing the disease, then perhaps goats aren't for you.

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REPRODUCTION

Goats are seasonal breeders, with mating occurring from March to late June. The gestation period for a goat is around 150 days, so kids are usually born in spring. Puberty usually occurs around 5-7 months of age.

Female goats can start producing milk before having a kid, and can continue to produce milk for several years without kidding. No kidding!!



Pregnancy toxaemia: This disease can affect goats in the last month of pregnancy. Contact your vet ASAP if you notice your pregnant goat lying down a lot or with swollen legs (especially the front legs). Pregnancy toxaemia is a life-threatening disease and abortion may be necessary to save the goats life.



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**CARING
FOR
GOATS**

