

Basic Herd Health

All goat breeders should be unconsciously noticing little points about their stock as they tend them.

Early Detection

Recognizing that goats are sick is easy when something obvious such as an injury or bloat occurs. Being able to spot the more subtle indications in ill health is important because treatment can then be initiated quickly. Early treatment can mean fewer deaths or fewer animals becoming ill. Be observant! In order to notice deviation from normality, one must be very familiar with the normal situation. All goat breeders should be unconsciously noticing little points about their stock as they tend them. Anything abnormal should be carefully noted in case it turns out to be significant. The signs that a goat breeder should monitor daily are as follows:

- General Attitude – alert and inquisitive
- Appetite – should be interested in food at almost any time
- Cudding – chewing cud at regular intervals throughout the day
- Eyes and Nose – bright eyes, no discharges
- Coat – clean and glossy
- Droppings – firm and pelleted
- Urine – light brown to yellow, no blood in it
- Breathing – regular and unlaboured
- Gait – steady, all feet taking weight as the goat walks
- Milk – note sudden changes in yield or texture (clots or blood)

Physiological Data

Care should be taken in interpreting the following measurements because they are extremely variable.

Measurements should be taken when the goat is at rest. It is no use counting the goat's respiration rate, for example, after chasing her around the field to catch her!

Body temp (rectal):

39-40.5 C (102.3-104.9 F)

Pulse: 77-89 beats per minute

Respiration: 10-30 per minute

Rumination: 1 – 1.5 per minute

Age at puberty:

90 days (bucks), 120 days (does)

Breeding season:

September to March (approx) in Northern Hemisphere

Duration of oestrus: 12-48 hours

Length between oestrus:

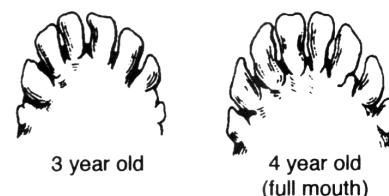
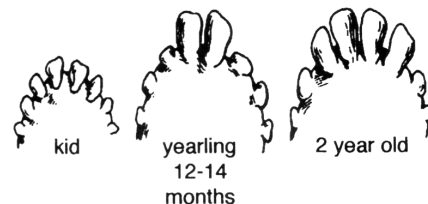
19-21 days

Gestation:

145-155 days (average 150 days)

How to Tell the Age of a Goat

You can determine the age of a goat by examining the teeth. A goat has a full set of lower incisor teeth but no upper front teeth. As indicated in the chart, a yearling goat has two mature incisors at the front of the mouth. As the goat ages, more mature incisors grow in until the goat has a full mouth.



Parasites

Given half a chance, goats are fairly worm-free. This is not to say that goats don't have any worms, but that due to their fastidious nature and their preference for browsing over grazing, goats come into less contact with worm eggs and larvae than do many other types of livestock.

Rotating pastures will help to keep down worm infestations, as will normal sanitary measures. Pastures require six months "rest" during cool months and 3 months during warm summer months. Keep goats out of dirty, muddy barn yards and manure piles which they love to climb if given the opportunity.

When deworming, it is usually necessary to deworm the goats twice – once and then again in two weeks. Worm eggs are not usual-

ly affected by dewormers, and when they hatch two weeks after the initial deworming treatment, a second treatment is needed to eliminate the possibility of re-infection.

Rotating the type and brand of dewormer used is advisable, to avoid the development by the worms of a tolerance to a particular dewormer. There are many brands and types available. The advice of a veterinarian should be sought to determine which dewormer is to be used and to set up a regular deworming program.

External parasites include mange and more commonly, lice. There are two types of lice; biting and sucking. They are more likely to be a problem for goats in winter than any other part of the year. Various treatments are available; a veterinarian should be consulted as to brand and withdrawal times.



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