



Congratulations! You are now the owner of a new goat! I am providing you with the following information that has worked for me. You will find this goat to be in excellent health and trust that it has been raised in a loving and caring environment. However, I cannot accept responsibility for the well being of this goat once it leaves my premises but I do believe if you use this information as a guideline, your new pet will thrive and will be around many years for your enjoyment. At this time I recommend that you locate a veterinarian with experience with goats and have his number handy, just in case. Please don't assume that the vet that's been caring for your dog also has knowledge of the Caprine world.

Goats are easy to keep and so much fun! Make sure they have secure fencing to keep predators out. I use mostly goat panels with a top strand of electric wire (to prevent dogs from jumping in). Also check that your goat can't slip his head through the fencing – if he can, he'll eventually trap himself.

My goats have never tried to escape but I have to watch for critters trying to get in. Remember that although goats can provide a good "butt" they are totally defenseless with dogs or other aggressive creatures. I had a donkey that scared one of my fainting goats and when the goat fell over, the donkey bit off part of her tail!

Don't be intimidated by the information I am providing you. I just think it's important for new goat owners to have a bit of basic information to get started. Your goat will love all the attention you can give it. It will love to be petted and brushed and just to be around you. Make sure you have at least 2 goats because you can't always be there and goats being herd animals need the constant companionship. It would be cruel to keep only one. And please remember that goats are farm animals. Don't try to housetrain your goat. It won't work!

Until your goat recognizes you as the “mommy”, allow him only a small amount of space where you can be with him and that he cannot get away from you. Make sure to talk to him (or around him), so that he gets used to your voice. You can use treats to facilitate this process. I use whole kernel corn (not too much), others use peanuts, crackers or unsalted popcorn. Try to use unsweetened treats (Fruit Loops are appreciated but not a good choice!).

If your goat doesn't come to you readily, you'll need to catch him and force him to realize you are not the enemy. However, **DO NOT CHASE** him! A goat's natural instinct is to run when chased. Hold him securely on your lap and use a soothing voice while trying to pet under his chin. Let him smell your breath. Don't play with his ears.. he won't like that. You can offer him treats too. After a few minutes you'll feel him relax. Gently loosen your grip but don't let him go right away. When you feel that he won't try to run away, gently take him and put him down. **YOU'RE** the boss!

When your little goat comes running to you when you come to his place, you can now let him loose in a larger area! He's ready for more freedom!

FEEDING

Always have fresh water available. You'll be surprised by the quantity of water these little animals need.

Goats are “browsers” (like deer) *and* “grazers” (like cattle & sheep) and will always prefer browse as opposed to grass if given the opportunity. Goats are not lawnmowers, and if you are thinking of getting goats so that they will mow your lawn, you will be sorely disappointed. But, they will happily kill many of your trees and shrubs for you.

The most important food in a goat's diet is foraging. Your goat must always have access to some kind of “greenery”... in the field they prefer stuff that they can eat at the level of their head or higher. They will stand on their hind legs to reach lower tree branches if they have too. Keep them away from gardens and decorative trees and bushes. Many of these are poisonous to them but they won't know that. Also, contrary to popular belief, goats don't care for regular grass no matter how green it is. For them it is a last resort item on the menu. If you have kudzu, they like that too!

If your goat has continued access to a good pasture, he will not need hay in the summer. However, during the winter months (or as soon as the fields lose their nutrients), he should have access to fresh hay at all times. If your hay is old and dusty, try feeding it from the ground instead of having the goats reach up to eat it. The dust will get in their noses and will make them cough. **NEVER** feed moldy (or moldy smelling), hay!

Don't be surprised by the amount of wasted hay that's left behind. Although goats will eat your shirt or your shoelaces, they're real picky when it comes to hay. Some folks don't give more hay until all the old one is gone... not good. Goats know what's good for them and what isn't. What they leave behind usually has no nutritional value for them. Ends up being extra bedding!

GOAT FEED (GRAIN)

I use Formax medicated Pro-Goat feed. Your local feed store or Coop will have a similar product from a different manufacturer – make sure it is at least 16% protein and medicated. This product will provide a balanced blend for your goat. However because of the medication it contains specifically for goats (prevention of coccidiosis), it can be harmful to horses & donkeys. Please read the attached label on the bag.

My goats get about 1 cup twice a day until they are 6 months old. After that, once daily will suffice. Formax also provides the correct balance of Calcium & Phosphorus necessary to prevent wethers from developing urinary calculi.

It is the opinion of many goat "people" that grain is only a supplement and not a necessity to a goat's diet. Although your goat LOVES his grain, it is not a requirement so long as he has good quality hay or forage. Goats enjoy alfalfa but it should only be given in moderation (as a treat), as it is fattening.

Another important ingredient for a complete & healthy diet is free access to minerals. I keep a bucket with a small amount of "Tastee Blend" goat minerals (must be specifically for goats). Goats will eat what they need, when they need it. It is absolutely necessary to provide your goat with this (or this type) of product. Some goat experts advise having baking soda available – my goats have never cared for this but it is available to them. You can buy at your feed store a mineral feeder that has a section for minerals and the other for baking soda. Mount this a little higher than rump level otherwise it will end up full of little black "berries". If you want to "spoil" your goat, put a Cinder block in front of his feeder... goats love to "step up" to eat!

SHELTER

Goats need a clean, shaded, draft-free place to go to as they please. If you feel comfortable sitting down in "their shelter" then their shelter is adequate and will make them happy. A three sided shelter will be fine – my little ones like to gather in a small group & sleep in the "dog-gloo"!

Check for wet bedding, strong ammonia odor and berries. Remove soiled bedding at least weekly and refresh with clean straw or wood shavings. I prefer straw as it doesn't cling to their fur.

Goats HATE rain or getting wet! Make sure they can get away from showers at all times.

IS MY GOAT SICK OR IS THIS NORMAL?

If your goat shows any of these behaviors: not interested in eating, lethargic, runny nose or eyes or coughing for several days, it's time to bring in the big guns and call the vet.

However, there are some symptoms that are treatable at home. My rule is if my goat is eating, then I can take care of what ever is ailing it. If it doesn't eat, it's serious. For instance, Pinkeye is a common goat ailment and you can find several ways to treat it by searching online. Diarrhea is a symptom of something else & you need to figure out what the cause is. Of course the diarrhea must be treated so your goat doesn't de-hydrate (Pepto in children's dosage usually works), but you need to find the cause of it. Usually it is food related – either the introduction of a new food or just too much grain or treats!

VACCINATIONS, WORMING & HOOF TRIMMING

Goats must be vaccinated annually with a CD/T vaccine. Your vet can administer this shot or you can obtain one at the coop or feed store and easily administer it yourself.

The bigger the pasture the less problems you will have with worms. Goats are subject to all kinds of internal parasites – naturally the cleaner the environment the less problems you'll have with worms. I worm every season and use a different product every time because worms will get immune to what you're using so you have to "trick" them and use a different poison each time! Check with your local feed store, they will recommend what is best. I like to alternate between Safeguard and Ivermectin.

I trim hooves regularly, as needed. Depending on the terrain your goat is living on will determine how often his hooves need trimming. You may find someone locally who'll do it for you – it shouldn't cost more than \$5.00 per goat or you can buy the \$20 tool (I use a clipper, others use sharp shears), and do it yourself. Make sure to also purchase "Quick Stop" or a similar product – to have on hand in case you cut too short and cause bleeding. I always have a bottle available when I'm trimming. I hope I haven't overwhelmed you with information but trust me, goats are easy keepers and well worth the time you'll invest in them.

When your pet is comfortably established, do send me a picture of him/her and I'll gladly post it on my website!

I'm confident that this little animal will bring you much pleasure and joy. All it asks in return is shelter, food and a little attention. If at any time you're not happy with your goat, please contact me before disposing of it. I would hate for it to end up at the flea market in the hands of someone who just wants to make a quick buck. I held this little creature in my hands from the minute it was born and it was never unwanted or unloved. Always remember that it is one of God's littlest ones. Please treat it with kindness.

Please feel free to contact me should you need additional information. Email is always the best method!

Christine Maentz

(423) 413-4088

Christine@crazygoatlady.com

RECOMMENDED WEB SITES

www.fiascofarm.com you will find a wealth of information here. Bookmark it and refer to it often. You'll learn something every time!

www.npga-pygmy.com the official breed association of the Pygmy goat

http://www.npga-pygmy.com/resources/husbandry/h hoof_trimming.asp easy, step by step hoof trimming instructions

<http://goat-link.com/> Everything you'll ever need to know about goats and more!

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