



Lucky You!
Bringing Home
Goat Kids

tips for a smooth transition

You will know your goats love you when they jump on your lap, nibble your clothes, rub up against you, and call to you for some attention when you walk past their pens. You will give them the essentials (chores for a couple of goats take no more than half an hour a day) and in return they will give you so much. They will remind you to slow down, they will make you laugh, they will snuggle you. After a few weeks with pet goats, you will have a hard time remembering life without them. Goats are great pets. They are very affectionate and playful. Eventually you may want to breed your does and milk them; earning their trust now will make owning milking goats easier. Treats are a great way to train goats. Ours love Teddy Grahams. If we have a few in our pockets, we can get them to do anything and follow us anywhere. Leaving their mother is a big adjustment, so they will need extra love during the transition. Goats love to chase people, but do not like to be chased. Their biggest predators are dogs and coyotes.

Shelter

Goats are hardy and develop a warm coat for winter, but they hate to get wet. Provide them with dry shelters with pine shavings for comfort and warmth. They love to sleep on a raised bunk. Clean their shelter often with fresh chips except in winter when we allow the base to build up to add warmth. (The manure is magic fertilizer if you can let it set for a year.) Outside of the shelter there should be a place for your goat to roam and play. A small rock pile will help keep hoofs worn down. This area should be fenced to keep goats in and predators out. A 5-foot No Climb fence works best for small breed goats.

Medication

Give all goat kids CDT immunizations at 6 weeks. They will need one more once they are home with you as a booster. When the goat reaches 1 year and every year after, it can receive a booster CDT injection. Our goats also get twice yearly BoSe shots and copper bolus since goats need copper and selenium and there is not enough in the Maine soil.

We have moved to only worming when a fecal shows they need it, which seldom happens. If their poop gets clumped together or runny, or their eyelids or gums turn white, these are signs they may need to be wormed and we let the vet tell us which wormer is best based on the results of a fecal.

We make sure that the goats have minerals and baking soda available at all times. Goats will self medicate by eating baking soda to prevent bloat.

Before You Pick Up Your Goat

_____ Get house and pen ready
_____ Woodshavings or straw for bedding
_____ Second cut hay to eat (they average about 25 bales per goat a year)
_____ Blue Seal Medicated Meat & Grow pellets
_____ Water bucket
_____ Free choice feeder with goat minerals (we use Sweetlix Meat Maker which contains copper) and baking soda

Getting Them Home

_____ A dog crate works well to transport goats
_____ Your goats have been nursed by their mother in the first 8 weeks, so they may be sad about leaving her and call out for her in first few days

The First Few Weeks

_____ Give a final CDT vaccination
_____ Can worm with Ivermectin Paste but ideally speak with vet about best parasite prevention practices
_____ Feed goat Medicated Pellets until 6 months. (Then you can stop grain, especially for wethers or feed according to weight)

Other Stuff...

A goat's average life span 15 years. Lots of time to love them! You may want to avoid pushing the top of their heads. It feels like head butting and may make them think you are a goat!

I like to have these things on hand: digital thermometer, Probios, blood stop cream, Ivermectin, hoof clippers, copper, AluShield Aerosol Bandage

[Bringing Home Goat Kids - Tips For a Smooth Transition continued]

HOOVES: Goats don't mind getting their hooves clipped. Every month or so, use special clippers to clip away the parts that curl over the sides of each half of their hoof and also trim the heel that sticks out until it is flat. Stop clipping if you get to pink.

CDT VACCINATION: In our opinion, all dams should be given a CDT shot 4 weeks before kidding. This prevents tetanus and enterotoxemia. This first shot passes on immunity to the kids at birth and lasts 5-6 weeks. I also give each kid a CDT shot (2cc SubC) in their right shoulder at 6-7 weeks. This may cause a bump in the location of the injection. No worries. Each goat should have a second CDT injection (2cc SubC) at around 9-10 weeks. (Some give another at 12-13 weeks, but I don't). You can get the vaccine and a couple of syringes with needles at Tractor Supply and give it yourself, or contact a vet to come give it and meet your goats.

DISBUDDING: We disbud kids in their first week in what we feel is the most humane way possible, by putting each of the goats under and giving them nerve block. As the site heals, the scab often gets knocked off and can bleed. This is not a cause for worry. If you have blood stop cream or AluShield Aerosol Bandage, that can help keep it from bleeding. The hair should grow over and they should not grow horns, although sometimes a spur does grow as they age. Often it just falls off on its own. If a full-on horn seems to be growing, you can contact a vet to fix it or just let it be. Both doelings and bucklings grow horns. It is up to the owner to decide what is best for their herd, but we have decided it is less risky to have them disbudded so they don't get a horn caught in a fence and pull it off. Also we have lots of visitors and find goats without horns to be safer.

STOMACH IN TRANSITION: In the transition to a new home, away from their mom's milk and to eating hay from a new field, kids can experience digestive issues. Most will resolve themselves in a day or two. I always give the goats a bit of ProBios paste on my finger tip if they are at all uncomfortable as it helps their rumen keep good bacteria levels up. It is like yogurt for us, so no worries that they will get it too often. Sometimes coccidia or other parasites can grow out of balance in the transition. You can treat with wormer and ProBios as soon as you see loose stool. (We use Ivermectin Horse paste and triple their weight to find the dose, on kids it is hard to figure since it is made for huge horses, but don't worry about giving them a little extra.) Better yet, if you can, take a sample to a vet for testing and then treat according to what they find. If possible, we suggest new goat owners keep feeding the kids Blue Seal Medicated Meat & Grow in the transition as it contains Decoquinatate for the prevention of coccidiosis, a common cause of diarrhea in goat kids.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR WETHERS: We band all boys at 7-8 weeks. They are able to breed a mature doe at 8 weeks! The testicles will get hard and shriveled and eventually fall off. It is not a bad idea to keep an eye on the site to make sure there are no signs of infection. It is also very important not to overfeed or give treats to wethers as they are more likely to develop urinary calcifications which can be deadly. Giving them Medicated Meat & Grow Blue Seal Feed, which contains ammonium chloride to aid in the prevention of urinary calculi, and limiting grain will help prevent this. You may stop grain all together between 6 months and a year with wethers, unless they need a bit to add on weight in the cold months.

GENERAL HEALTH: Just like with human kids, go with your intuition. If you read too much online, you will be convinced your goat is dying every time it sneezes! (Perfectly healthy goats sneeze as an alert to other goats that something unusual is near!) They are very hardy and if you have a good eye, you will catch any potential problems early and be able to fix them with a vet's help. Most common signs that a goat is sick are: not eating, staring into space, and/or runny stool. As soon as I see any of these symptoms I take their temperature. Have a digital thermometer and some lubricant on hand in case you need to check. The first question the vet will ask is, "What is their temp?" 102-103 is ideal. If it is too low or too high it is a sign they need treatment.