How I Do Goats! By Clint Severe (improved 2nd edition)

2017

I think the first and largest hurdle is to maintain pasture at the right height, in order to cause the foliage to grow when the sun shines, and to keep the parasites out of the goats; not to mention keeping the goats in the pasture. Fed goats are quiet goats, and quiet goats are “happy” goats.

Goats prefer browse (brush) vs grass, but they eat grass, especially with a salt block available. Salt (mineral block) helps them metabolize the grass better, and makes the milk sweet. 4” high and higher grass is best for prevention of parasites. This keeps the goats healthy and fed, so they don’t go through the fences for want of feed (because of worms and hunger).

Whole grains are better than pulverized grains because whole feed (such as whole corn) requires the goat to chew its feed again. This raises the pH of the cud, by using more saliva; preventing acidosis. Smaller grains, like whole wheat kernels, go through the goat without being chewed; unless the wheat is still “in the head”. The goats will re-chew it thoroughly if it is still in the head.

Some goats regulate their eating preferences, but some do not (differing phenotypes). Some can maintain a healthy stool when allowed unlimited access to concentrated carbohydrates (grains). But some will scour and die in weather extremes, for lack of body temperature regulation, caused by the electrolyte imbalances of loose stools.

When my goats overload and freeze/overheat from too much grain, I follow the Vet Manual. It directs the salvage of the meat by slaughter; if it is still fresh (like deer taken and harvested in deer season). The problem is not from a disease but imbalance, and can be pressure cooked even if some sepsis has occurred prior to death. Some goats go this way even though they are fat (containing large quart size islands of fat inside their abdomins when slaughtered). Their appetites are not self regulated, even though they are very fat inside, possibly from being stressed earlier in their lives (like humans react to stress; with obesity). So don’t stress’em.

I use a custom-made round pen to pen my goats at night, or when I leave to work or to participate in other activities. It is dog proof. This prevents attacks from predators behind my back. The pen can be moved manually to a new location as often as more feed is needed, or bedding conditions need changed. I also use a game camera to monitor the pen for predator and theft problems. The round pen is constructed of a combination of wire hog and cattle panels (lower half hog panel, upper half cattle). I had to cut part of the cattle panel off, and splice the hog panel to the lower half; to get it dog and kid proof. I reinforced the lowest ground level wire by welding over each spot weld with my mig wire welder. This allows me to tip the pen on edge and roll it to a new location (like a big tire), and then tip it back and drop it to the ground without breaking the lowest wire off the panels. The size of the pen is the circumference of 3 panels (16 foot panels) welded end to end; making a circle. This protects the goats at night, or when I am gone. I use a lean-to in the round pen for a roof and wind break. The lean-to consists of a plastic pickup bed liner; leaned against the pen from the inside. This satisfies a shelter law. I monitor the NOAA weather report daily, to determine how to shelter against the wind direction (moving the lean-to).

During single digit and lower temperatures I put the goats in the shed with a hay bale and grain feeder (at night or when I leave for some reason). The shed is dog proof, and has a low roof (about 4.5 feet off the ground). The shed Is centered over my 1000 gallon concrete septic tank (normally would melt the snow, if in the open). It utilizes the extra heat during cold nights. Warmer temperatures are better for the portable round pen, because of bacteria that become active in the warm close conditions of the shed; causing damage.

I warm up their drinking water during conditions when the water freezes too quickly to allow them access. Room temperature water causes them to tank up on the water, more so than how they would drink if the water were ice cold. This is especially good for Billy goats that crystallize their urine in freezing conditions; for lack of fluids.

I follow the Vet Manuals guidelines when it comes to weaning times (allowing the kids 8 weeks of milk). I use Coaches tape to prevent the kids from going beyond the 8 week period, and to put a seal on the milk when I need to monitor for thieves (see photo below). I apply the cloth tape over the tit opening by placing half of a 3” piece vertically on the tit, with the center folding over the tip of the tit; so it goes up both sides equally. The tape sticks to itself on both sides of the tip of the tit. Then, I tear off about 4” of tape, and tear it lengthwise into 2 equal pieces that are 4” long. I take each of these and circle the upper portion of the vertical

tape already on the tit. This locks the vertical tape in place. It will last for weeks unless it is manually removed. The kids will not suck on it normally, because it is foreign to them. Occasionally, I get a kid that tries to such milk through the tape anyway. So I sometimes have to double the tape over the tip. This allows the goats to forage together while being weaned, and helps the kids emulate their parent goat's eating habits rather than having to separate them from their mothers.

It is important to remove the tape and relieve the utter during the first few days of weaning; to avoid rupturing the utter from building milk pressure. I let one of the weaning kids suck for a few seconds until the bag is soft to the touch again, then I reapply the tape. I do this as often as the bag (utter) becomes firm, until it remains softer and free from the danger of rupturing. I use the tape to reduce the milk to an amount adequate for just my needs (by letting time lapse between milkings), rather than throw milk away and waste the goat. If I need more, the tape allows me a way to bump the milk up (using the kid to bump the bag a couple of times). See the photo below.

I use a cow bell on 1 goat, to help me find them, or to tell whether they are being chased by something. I maintain a .223 caliber single shot rifle for predators. I also have .40 and .45 caliber auto pistols; 1 of which has a Laser for evenings. Coyotes

are night carnivores, so I like being able to Laser at night if needed. Missouri allows livestock owners the right to defend against domestic dogs also (priority to livestock). I have shot more than 1 dog in Missouri that was chasing my goats. I have killed dozens over the years, including attacks in other States I have lived in. The hard thing is having to wait for the attack (waiting for a carnivore to prove it is a carnivore) when “a stitch in time would save” an attack, or maybe a fetus; or herd. All the goats I own came out of a .223 bullet. What I mean is that they would all be dead if I had not acted with my rifle. They all came out of the same ancestor that I had to shoot a dog off of (off her body). That gives you an idea of how big that law produces livestock.

I de-horn the kids at differing ages depending on when the horn bud is ready (different phenotypes). This is to keep them from getting caught in the panels and woven wire fencing. Predators can kill them when they are hung up in fences, or they can starve . I usually de-horn them between 9 and 14 days old. I like to give a tetanus (CDT) shot to the kids a day before, and boost it 28 days later. When de-horning, I use a tranquilizer (Xylazine 0.03 ml per kid) to make it painless.

First, I write out a schedule to allow proper sequencing of events (see table below).

Give first goat it's shot. Wait 15 minutes for effect (Xylazine 0.03 ml per kid – IntraMuscular). Small 1 ml/cc syringe is required.	Burn the first goat's first horn bud. Wait 10 minutes for the cooling of the skull; before the next burn. Hold the hot socket centered on the horn bud for 9 seconds NO PRESSURE APPLIED!	**Burn the first goat's last remaining horn bud, 10 minutes after the first horn bud; using the same method as the first burn.**
Give the second goat it's shot. Wait 15 minutes for effect.	**First burn; Second goat etc.**	**Second burn; Second goat etc.**
Give the third goat it's shot, and so on for all remaining goats.	**First burn; Third goat etc.**	**Second burn; Third goat etc.**

It is important to keep the tool red hot, by keeping it in the coals between burns. DO NOT apply excessive pressure with the red hot tool. You only need to hold it centered on the horn bud, and in contact with the skin. You want the skin to be copper – colored when the 9 seconds are up. You want to see a uniform copper circle centered around the horn bud. You need to use the 3/8" drive socket that fits a 3/4" nut, and weld the nut end of the socket to the end of a pipe (find a soft China-made socket that welds better), so that the extension end is applied to the horn bud. I protect the unconscious kids from the cold weather or the hot sun, and from dogs after the procedure; till they come to their senses. Never put Iodine on the fresh burns. You can put some hand sanitizer or hand lotion on them to keep them moist, but NOT Iodine for at least a week. The burns will not bleed unless they are scuffed roughly by something. You can get Xylazine from the Vet. There are 2 different concentrations. My spec's are for the most concentrated solution. It is very potent, and takes a good pair of eye balls to read the small syringe increments. The needle is very small too, something like what a diabetic's needle looks like. I stick it into their necks, and they go right to sleep quickly. I am

sure too much would put them to sleep permanently, so be careful. The dose is 3/100 of 1 ml/cc, NOT 3/10 of 1 ml/cc

I like to nurse the nanny with only 2 kids, so I sometimes reduce the newborns to 2, by butchering the excess kids like I do squirrels. This prevents runts from lack of milk. I choose the kids with the best features (phenotypes). I was taught by the county extension how to judge goats (selections 1,2,3) and for their leg straightness, complexion, bite and girth etc. This way if there is a defect, you can still salvage the investment by harvesting the meat. I like the self regulating goat (does not overload on grain) but the phenotype is hard to spot at birth. The real picky, slow eaters are the self regulating goats. They would die (starve) if put in competition for feed, but they do not scour like the winners of the competition do.

I get suture from the vet, and injectable antibiotics from the feed store, and I doctor my own goats. I have sown them up and treated infections. The new regulations allow for injectable antibiotics over-the-counter only. In-feed-type antibiotics have to be prescribed by the Vet. The USA is moving away from excess antibiotics in livestock (like Europe).

Kidding has its challenges. My rule of thumb is to follow the water (when the water breaks). There is lubrication for the kids to come out for approximately 24 hours after the water breaks, so I help them if they are not getting their kids out during this time frame. The longer the labor - the more susceptible the nanny is to infection(sepsis). So when it breaks I try to be there to evaluate whether the front hooves are coming first. Rather than let them struggle getting the hind hooves out (breech) I try to situate the fetus so it the front hooves come first. A small hand is best (grade school age hand) but I have reached in and located the front hooves; and then pulled the kid. Sometimes the front hoof of one kid is coming out with the hind hoof of another kid (kills everything without help). So I stuff the hind leg back in and pull the front legs of the first kid first. If you lose the lubrication then you will lose everything, unless you salvage the doe by butchering her; if it becomes obvious that it is too dry for kidding (24 hours after water break). Or you can call a Vet if you are rich enough.

The Vet manual indicates that cattle (Ruminants) should not be given calcium rich feed (such as Alfalfa) during their gestations before they give birth, but after they give birth; to avoid milk fever. So I try to avoid feeding my goats clover type feeds before they kid (calcium rich Alfalfa). I try to plan their conceptions so that my clover is just coming on (April 15) when the goats kid. I let the nannies cycle in the fall before I have them bred, till the timing is right for their feed in the spring (5 months later). This eliminates kidding on the coldest day of the year too. When they cycle, they wag their tails constantly and cry for a billy. This lasts about 24 hours (ovulation) and occurs about every 14 days; depending on the breed.

I butcher or sell my own goats on the hoof (not the meat) to regulate my pasture height; to keep them in, and to enjoy the meat myself. I can not sell the meat, but I can give it away. I have a smoker that I can fall back on if I lose access to freezer space.

I trim the hooves when they get long, and worm my goats in the spring and fall; when the frost stops or starts. I use Ivermectin type wormers, and also a fluke wormer because I have goldfish in my pond.

I rely on feeding, herding and penning to protect my goats and to keep them in. If I had the money I would fence the perimeter of my property with the tall wire panels that combine the hog and cattle style panels into 1 panel style. This would be coyote, dog and kid goat proof.

I do not recommend using guard dogs or mules, because they both kill goats or cause damage to fetuses. I have no experience with other types of guard animals. I have been told that even pups raised with goats will still grow up and kill goats.

References:

Merck Veterinary Manual (ninth edition), County Extension (Goats 101), Drury University Senior Research Paper, Personal experience. Not all referencing included.