

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A GOAT AT TEACHER'S FOLLY FARM

Goats need “the usual” needs of animals:

- Food and supplements
- Water
- Shelter and fencing
- Veterinary care
- Hoof care
- Surveillance system (optional)

Our goats are fed twice a day. They can do okay on once a day feeding if weight is monitored to be sure they're getting enough. Each Nigerian Dwarf goat is given approximately ½ pound of orchard grass pellets (not cubes) and a very small handful of black oil sunflower seeds (helps keep the coat from drying out) at each feeding morning and evening (a little more for the Mini-Saanens). Goats are all about freshness. If the pellets sit in the bucket overnight, they are GROSS. If you just pour more on top they will build up. But a goat from another pen will greedily wolf them down. In the summer, we feed by 8AM and after dark. When goats are fed, they generate a lot of internal heat which can cause problems on hot summer days if they are fed and digesting during the heat of the day. Pregnant goats, does in milk, and kids for the first year once their rumen (one of their stomachs) is fully developed (this happens at about 2 months old) also get goat grain added to their ration for the extra vitamins, minerals, protein etc. they need during these times, ½ pound for adults or a handful for kids.

In the mid-afternoon around 3 to 4 PM, they are either put out to forage in our pasture or given hay for fiber. If your goats have extra weight, you can feed timothy, but if not, there are more calories and nutrition in orchard grass which is what I use and they need less of it for their ration.

Goats are browsers, not grazers, so they love to clean up tree branches, dead leaves, weeds, wild rose bushes (leaves only but then the bush will die), and even poison ivy. They will graze on grass if that's all there is, but generally prefer the browsing forage. Be careful with trees you like, goats will browse on the leaves and strip the bark which is likely to kill your tree. We have a fence around the ones in the pasture that we want to keep for shade. Also, certain plants are toxic

to goats as they are for many animals. Azaleas are an example. Jimson weed (*Datura stramonium*) is poisonous and a common plant in pastures here. Please google for plants toxic to goats to review what they should not eat that may be in your pasture.

Goats should have free choice goat minerals and also baking soda. Goats have particular copper requirements which is available in minerals made for goats and can be given as a bolus. People that have water with high iron content must be especially careful as the iron binds with copper to make the goat more deficient. Lack of copper causes a poor coat and reproductive issues. The baking soda helps the pH of their rumen maintain properly. For wethers, I stir a scoop of ammonium chloride into their minerals to help prevent kidney stones which they can be susceptible to. If wethers are sharing a pen with does, the ammonium chloride doesn't hurt the girls.

Our goats love goat treats, low salt wheat thins, other low salt crackers, animal crackers, and best of all Honey Nut Cheerios. Some goats LOVE banana peel (not the YUCKY meat!) Break off a piece. I do not like feeding an entire strip for fear of choking, but I have to admit that some goats (I am looking at YOU Lina!) have snuck and stolen the entire skin of a banana, but like I said, I recommend tearing each strip into about a 2" long segment. We do not feed them treats too often or they become pests every time you walk out to the barn. But we do it to encourage them to come, especially for meds, blankets, the vet, etc. You have to teach goats to like treats so feed them as you get to know them so they want them when you need them to. Goats learn to eat by watching others.

Goats must have shelter from wind, rain, and sun. They ***hate*** getting wet backs and even hooves. They are susceptible to pneumonia if they get too wet and cold. We do blanket our goats with goat blankets when it's less than 30 at night in the winter, but most people don't. Extra hay at bedtime when it's really cold at night serves the same purpose, firing up the heater from the inside rather than the outside. In hot Virginia summers, we keep a fan blowing in the stalls if it's over 90 degrees. Our goats always have shade available. Goats are susceptible to heat stroke when it's really hot and humid. A 4'x4' cube can hold 2 goats. An 8'x8' can hold maybe 6. Square shapes are more efficient than rectangular. If the stall is 12'x12' or larger having a means to shut off a part of it even temporarily will make

your life much easier when the vet comes and you need to catch goats. Having a huge pasture is wonderful and provides forage and exercise, but regardless of the space the goats have it is best to have a smaller “sacrifice” paddock attached to the shelter, maybe something on the order of 400 square feet. This serves two purposes, it can contain them prior to a vet call so that you can then herd them into the shelter for even easier catching, and it provides a place to limit their range after you bring them home. We strive to make our goats comfortable with people but being prey animals, they are still generally shy with strangers. Each goat is an individual and you will be surprised at how much each one has their own personality but when they first go to their new home, they will be shy until they get to know you. Keeping them in the small paddock for the first couple of weeks or so will force them to interact with you and hasten the acclimation process. Bring in a chair (best to take it back out after you leave so they do not use it as a platform to jump the fence or get tangled in it) and sit with treats (see above) in hand to lure them in. Given a little time and patience, the goats will include you in their herd. They are very lovable little creatures. If you expand your herd, having another stall with attached small paddock that adjoins the first will allow the old and new goats to get to know each other across the fence before putting them in together. This can help them to get used to each other in a lower stress sort of way.

When the vet comes and at other times, you’ll have to restrain and walk your goats. The best way is with a goat halter. There are several available from Tractor Supply. An inexpensive one is listed below. You can use a dog collar, but make sure it has a breakaway capability (leather, not plastic) and it is **CRITICALLY** important that when leading you do not apply sufficient pressure on the windpipe to cause the goat to cough. Their windpipe is easily damaged with pressure there.

Sufficient water is necessary for goats and they will not drink cold or dirty water. We put bucket heaters in our buckets in the winter. After an extensive long term scientific study, it has been determined that goats strongly prefer light colored water buckets to black ones. Further tests are required to determine the cause. Maybe they like to see to the bottom for the presence of dirt or some lurking predator in there. It is best to go with the smallest sized bucket that serves to keep the goats in water. It makes for less waste and presents a smaller target area for them to poop into. We like 14-quart flat back buckets (see below). One should

keep 3 or 4 goats in water. If there are more than that, we add another 14-quart bucket. This gives the goats a second target to poop into.

Goats need **good** strong fencing. If they can fit through it or get over it, they will go wandering. They are curious animals. We use goat panels that are 48" high with a 4x4 grid put in with T-posts. We have occasionally had a goat jump this but only rarely and only when they are young. If you have a young kid (baby goat) the 4x4 grid is not small enough to keep them in, they will go right through it or get their heads stuck when they grow a little. I have read that some people train their goats with electric fencing, but I would only use this inside a good perimeter fence to partition your space, not for your perimeter fencing.

Before you contemplate goats, you need to make sure you have a veterinarian that is available to provide for their welfare. Not all vets service or know goats. Goats need to see a vet annually for shots – tetanus, rabies, etc. must be maintained to protect their health. Their hoofs need trimming about every 3-4 months or they become overgrown and misshapen which can even deform the feet permanently. This makes it easy to develop rot or infections and makes it uncomfortable for the goat to walk. This is easy to learn to do, but our vet and our horse Farrier both are willing to provide this service for us. Check with yours to see if they can do this for you or show you how. There are also directions for how to shape the hoof on the internet and in goat care books.

I had finished an update to this document and was starting on one to provide some tips on kidding. I was typing a paragraph on the benefits of audio and video surveillance in the barn when I heard a kid screaming on the barn baby monitor. I looked on the video camera and saw that 3 week old Franklin had his leg stuck in the hay rack trying to eat just like his momma DeeDee. I ran out in my pj's to free him and on the way out I thought, "maybe I should add surveillance systems to this". We started with a "1000' range" baby monitor and later added a video surveillance camera. These are HIGHLY recommended for kidding, but also serve a definite function in "day-to-day" life with goats. I work from home so I can hear what is going on and if something sounds odd, I can check the video for details. Besides, sometimes it is fun to just eves drop on the goats 😊. The video is also available when I am away from home. We have been extremely happy with these two products:

VTech Audio Baby Monitor with up to 1,000 ft of Range

https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B017UIR9F8/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_search_asin_title?ie=UTF8&psc=1

There is also a single receiver model but having a receiver at each end of the house is of benefit to us. The “1000’ foot range” is optimistic and depends on weather conditions.

Outdoor PT WiFi IP Security Camera 1080P Home Surveillance Camera Pan/Tilt Two-Way Audio Motion Detection Color Night Vision

https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B08NFRH9Y9/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_search_asin_title?ie=UTF8&psc=1

This requires a fairly good wifi signal. You will likely need an outdoor wifi router.

Products from Tractor Supply that we use:

Standlee Premium Western Forage Premium Orchard Grass Pellets, 40 lb. Bag

SKU: 512180199

Manna Pro Goat Mineral Supplement, 8 lb., 1000325

SKU: 509943699

Royal Wing Black Oil Sunflower, 20 lb.

SKU: 685884199

Fortex Industries 14 qt, Flat Back Bucket, Pack of 2

SKU: 102734599

Sullivan Supply Soft Braid Sheep And Goat Halter

SKU: 146766099

Ammonium Chloride for goats is available at CFC Farm Supply.

We get our hay currently at TriCounty in Marshall but have often gotten our hay at CFC also. We were feeding timothy then so I don't know if they have orchard grass available.