



GOAT 101:

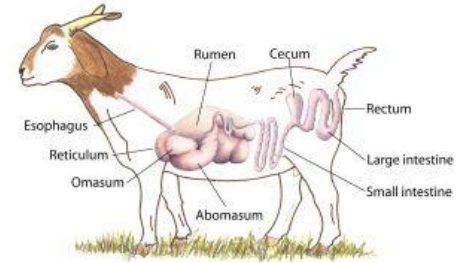
Information about caring for goats



Pineview Veterinary Hospital wants to help you keep your goats as healthy and happy as possible. Below, you will find information about feeding, housing, and veterinary care specifically for our goat patients. And as always, we are available to answer any goat questions you may have at (910) 655-2442.

FEEDING

Goats are similar to cattle in that they have a four-compartment stomach. The rumen is the largest of these compartments and is located on the left side of the animal, extending from under the ribs back to as far back as their flank. All the food eaten gets fermented by bacteria here, which break it down into the fat, protein, and sugars they need to survive. The base of a goats' diet is **forage (grass, shrubs, weeds, and hay)** and it is important that they get most of their diet from forage to maintain a healthy rumen. If given enough land or hay, they can survive off forage alone.



Example of the goat digestive tract.

Typically we recommend adding grain to their diet only if they fall into one of the following categories: sickness, pregnant, nursing kids, or losing weight. You can offer the group a handful every now and then to teach them to come to you when you need to gather them. **If your goats fall into one of these categories, we recommend a goat-specific feed.** It is important to not overfeed grain to goats, as the grain can overwhelm the bacteria in the rumen and cause a disease called bloat.

It is also very important that goats NOT be fed horse feed or alfalfa in any form (pellets, cubes, or hay). Horse feed and alfalfa are too high in calcium and other minerals, which can cause urinary stones. These stones are very painful and may require emergency surgery at NC State to remove, at a cost of \$2,500-3,000. Purina makes a high quality goat feed that they like to eat but any feed specifically labeled for goats is acceptable. Purina has a good website with their line of goat products at <http://www.purinamills.com/goat-feed/>. As all other species, goats also need a **mineral** available for them to eat. Minerals come as either a block that the goats lick or as loose minerals that you put in a pan for them to eat free choice. And as always, it is very important that goats have access to **fresh, clean water**.

HOUSING



This is a good example of a pen for veterinary work as well as providing a shelter.

Goats typically like to be up high. If you have a shelter in their pasture, it is common to find the goats on top of it! For this reason, it is important that their shelter not be next to the fence line where they can jump over and out. Goats are also notorious for being able to get out of a fence so be careful! Typically a strand of electric (hot) wire at the bottom of your fence on the inside of the pen is enough to keep them off the fence. Otherwise, a strong fence of wire or wood is recommended. Just keep their horns in mind if you choose a wire fence with no electric fence.

While a shelter is not a requirement, it is a nice option if you are breeding your goats or don't have any shade in your pasture during the summer. For veterinary care, we ask that you have a small pen (or a shelter with 3 sides and a gate) that you can put the goats in before the vet arrives. Goats are very smart and will know what is going on from the moment our trucks pull up! You can practice bringing the group up into the shelter with a couple of handfuls of feed and locking them up for a few minutes. They will learn that the vet doesn't come every time and be more willing to come up with grain.

DEWORMING

Parasites of the gastrointestinal tract are a very common problem in the Southeast. There are two parasites that we worry about in goats – Coccidia and haemonchus. **Coccidia** is a parasite that typically occurs in warm, wet weather and causes diarrhea that can get progressively worse. **Haemonchus** is a parasite that attaches to the intestinal lining and takes a blood meal. It requires short grass to complete its lifecycle and a severe infestation can cause a life-threatening anemia

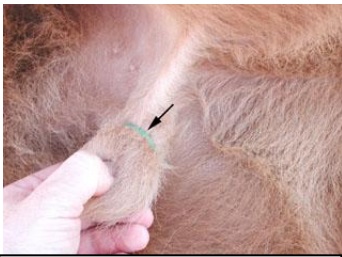
(lack of red blood cells). Signs of anemia include lethargy, sudden decrease in appetite, paleness, depression, and eventually inability to stand. **We recommend performing a fecal egg count** on each goat to determine their current parasite load. With this information, we can make recommendations about routine deworming and pasture management. Unfortunately, most of our dewormers in goats are no longer effective due to overuse. This is why we recommend annual fecals to create a deworming plan, along with constant monitoring for clinical signs of disease.

VACCINATIONS

We currently recommend two vaccines in our goats – **CDT and Rabies**. CDT (brand name is Cavalry 9) is a combination vaccine that protects against Clostridial diseases found in the soil, like tetanus. We recommend a kid receive its first shot at birth and then a booster one month later. After that, it is an annual booster for the rest of the animal's life. If we do not know if the goat has ever had vaccines, we recommend an initial shot with a booster one month later and then an annual booster after that. Rabies is still an important disease in the US and unfortunately, we have rabies-positive wildlife in our area. Rabies is recommended once a year in all goats over 6 months of age.

CASTRATION

Most male goats will reach sexual maturity at 4-5 months of age, meaning they can breed a female at this age.



Proper placement of band (arrow) for castration.

However, we also know that influence of testosterone, produced in the testicles, will increase the diameter of their urethra until they are about 9 months old, thus helping to prevent bladder stones from becoming lodged in the urethra and obstructing urine flow. Therefore, our recommendation for castrating is waiting until male goats are at least 9 months of age. However, this means separating them from the female herd at 4 months of age to prevent them from breeding their mother or sisters.

If separating them is not possible on your farm or you are raising meat goats for slaughter, we recommend castrating them as early as possible. You can band their testicles at birth, which will cut off the blood supply to the testicles and they will fall off after a week or so. However, the bands must be tight enough to work and they must be placed correctly, otherwise a small part of the testicle is left behind and can still cause testosterone-related behaviors. The other option is to have them castrated at the clinic or your farm. We use injectible anesthesia and local lidocaine to surgically remove the testicles. They are sent home on pain medication and antibiotics and do very well following surgery.

DEHORNING

Some owners like to remove the horns to prevent fighting and getting them caught in the fencing. A goat's horns are an extension of their skull and made of similar bone. When goats are very young (no more than 2-3 weeks old), we are able to burn off the horn nubs. A hot iron is placed just on the outside of the horn base and the heat will kill the cells that grow the horns. If the goat is a month old or older, their sinus cavity begins to grow into the base of the horn. This means that if we remove the entire horn at that age, we are creating an opening into the sinus cavity and potentially causing a sinus infection.



A 7 day old goat kid - you can see the horn nubs in the center and the burn circle around the outside.

We can tip the horns of an older animal with a wire as the tips of the horns are like the white part of our finger nail with no feeling. However, care must be taken to not take off too much horn and create the opening into the sinus cavity. If you want the horns completely removed in an adult animal, it is a surgical procedure requiring anesthesia and skin flaps to close the sinus cavities. Many owners choose to leave the horns of a goat alone, as they are an easy way to catch and restrain goats. Their horns are very strong and will not break if you hold on to them.

Pineview Veterinary Hospital is proud to offer comprehensive services for our goat owners, whether you are raising pet or commercial goats. We recommend starting with a herd evaluation to cover all the areas mentioned above, as well as begin vaccines as needed and collect fecal samples. We are also available to answer any questions you have about current problems you having. To schedule an appointment for a herd evaluation or to ask with either Dr. Long or Dr. Freeman, please call our office at (910) 655-2442.