

Goat Care Basics

Took a Leap Farm

August 8, 2016

All goats sold by Took a Leap Farm are disbudded, castrated (if applicable), weaned, and up-to-date on all shots (CD&T toxoid and pneumonia). When you purchase your goat, Took a Leap Farm provides records of all care provided to your animal. Should you need to take your goat to the vet, please be sure to bring these records with you to help determine an appropriate care plan.

When You First Get Your Goats

Goats, like other animals, can get stressed by environmental changes, so you will want to keep a close eye on them for the first few days in your care.

On the day before you received your goats, each was treated with a coccidiostat, which helps to control a small intestinal parasite that often affects young animals. We also treated your goats with Ivermectin, a wormer that controls other intestinal parasites. Stress can create an opportunity for parasites to flourish, so we treat to help prevent this.

When you received your goats, we provided a bag of food (***Blue Seal Meat Goat Grow and Finish***) and loose minerals (***Poulin Goat Minerals***). Although it is not necessary to continue with these particular products, we recommend:

1. A grain with ammonium chloride, which is very important for male goats, who can be predisposed to urinary stones. Ammonium chloride, along with a balanced diet, helps to prevent stones, which are often fatal for goats. (The Blue Seal grain referenced above has the added benefit of a coccidiostat, which again helps with parasite control.)
2. A loose mineral made especially for goats. Minerals are critical to the good health of your goats — in particular, they need copper. (If you see a mineral for sheep and goats, ***don't buy it***, as it will not meet the goat's copper requirements.) We recommend loose minerals fed free-choice, as they are more easily accessible to the goats. Tractor Supply sells small black containers with two compartments that can be screwed onto the wall of the goat shelter and filled with minerals. Refresh as necessary, being sure that the goats have access to minerals at all times.
3. Switching to new grain, if you choose to do so, ***slowly*** to avoid upset tummies. Mix the new grain with some of the grain that we have provided, increasing the proportion of new food over a few days.

Your goats should have access to fresh water and good quality hay at all times. ***Do not bottle-feed water to your goats*** — this can cause bloody urine.

If you notice that one of your new goats has diarrhea, don't panic. Withhold all grain until the diarrhea subsides and provide supportive care — make sure that the goat stays hydrated with electrolytes (available at Tractor Supply). You can also give a small dose (about 1 ounce) of kaolin pectate (or Pepto Bismol — **NO** other antidiarrheals!) to help soothe the tummy. If the diarrhea does not resolve within about 24 hours, we recommend sending a fecal sample from the affected goat to your veterinarian for analysis.

Feeding Your Goats

Non-breeding animals (e.g., wethers and dry does) have relatively simple dietary requirements — the primary source of nutrition should be a good quality hay. You can supplement hay with a **small** amount of grain — we feed approximately 1/2 c. of grain per goat twice a day.

Basic Health Care

1. **If a goat appears off — lethargic, “star-gazing”, or is off feed — the first thing to check is the goat’s temperature.** Use a quick-read digital baby thermometer, which is one of the most important pieces of equipment for a goat owner. Apply a small amount of lubricant (KY jelly) to the tip of the thermometer and insert into the rectum. The goat’s temperature should be **between 101.5 and 103.5 degrees**. An elevated temperature indicates infection — check with your vet for appropriate treatment. A temperature below 100 degrees is a critical situation and requires immediate veterinary attention.
2. You will need to **vaccinate your goat annually** for clostridium prefringens and tetanus. You can purchase this vaccination (**use the toxoid, not the antitoxin!**) and administer it yourself, or you can consult your veterinarian for assistance. We also vaccinated your goat against pneumonia; it is up to you whether you continue this practice.
3. You will want to **decide how to handle parasite control in your goats** on an ongoing basis. Some people choose to worm on a regular schedule, alternating between SafeGuard and Ivermectin (an injectable wormer administered orally for goats). At Took a Leap Farm, we conduct regular fecal exams and worm based on the results — your vet can help with these inexpensive tests. We find that this method works well for us, as it helps to ensure that we don’t build up an unnecessary resistance in our herd. (Please note that all goats have worms — this is natural. You are aiming to control parasites, rather than eradicate them entirely.)
4. You will need to **trim your goat’s hooves every 6-8 weeks**. We use green-handled hoof trimmers from Tractor Supply. There are a number of good videos on YouTube that show you how to trim hooves if you’ve never done this before.
5. You may want to discuss a selenium supplement with your vet. Maine’s soil is selenium deficient, which means that it can be hard for animals to get enough of this mineral through their regular diet. Selenium deficiencies result in muscle weakness and slow growth.

A Basic Goat Care Kit

You can go crazy — and spend a lot of money — on things that you may never need for your goats. The following items are those that we use frequently or consider essential to have on hand:

- Rectal thermometer and lubricant
- Medications: CD & T **antitoxin** (this is the antidote for C. prefringens, not the vaccination mentioned above); fortified Vitamin B Complex, Dimethox (a coccidiostat)
- 3 ml syringes with 1/2” 20 ga needles
- Electrolytes
- Chlorhexadine or similar antiseptic wash
- Wormers: Ivermectin or SafeGuard

Where To Purchase Goat Supplies

Tractor Supply or your local feed store will have many of the items that you will need for your goats. In addition, we recommend Jeffers Livestock Supply (www.jeffers.com) for vaccines, wormers, syringes, and so on.