

Feeding Goats to Keep Them Healthy.

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The goal in feeding goats is to foster good health, get maximum production while staying within a reasonable budget. Under-feeding and over-feed goats can make them become sick. It is important to feed just what the goat requires. So this raises the question as to how much grain and hay should a goat be fed. It depends on the breed, male/female, body size, lactation (dry/lactating). Prices and low cost alternative grains are likely to determine what you feed. Some general guidelines are:

- Feed five (5) pounds of high quality hay per adult animal.
- For milking does, feed 1 pound grain per day and an additional pound for every quart of milk produced.
- Hay and grain offered should be consumed in about 20 minutes. Much longer than 20 minutes may be overfeeding.
- Watch out for moldy grains.
- Offer free choice minerals formulated for goats.
- Ratio must be approximately 2 parts of calcium to 1 part of phosphorus (2:1)
- Do not feed sheep and horse mineral to goats.
- Offer minerals formulated for goats.

Goats can develop acidosis and bloat if they have access to too much grain. It is important to feed hay first in the morning before feeding grains to avoid acidosis. Grain ration should not be fed alone. In addition, feed high quality hay before allowing them to eat new, green moist grass. It is important to know your pasture and control poisonous plants. Remember prevention is better than cure. A sickness in one goat in whole herd can cost about 10-20 times more when you have to treat as opposed to the cost of prevention. Another disease that is associated with feeding is laminitis. Signs are lameness, reluctance to move, fever and all 4 feet are hot to touch. Predisposing causes are overeating or sudden access to concentrate/high grain and low roughage diet. It can be partially cause by complication of other diseases. Provide a balanced ration with no sudden or drastic change in diet.

It is essential to pay attention to housing, equipment and bedding so as to prevent injury and contamination of the feed. Keep housing areas and barn yard free of equipment with sharp edges and derelict machinery. Injury to the mammary gland can bring about mastitis. Mastitis is an inflammation of the mammary gland/udder of the female. It is associated with poor hygienic practices. It may begin with bruising of mammary tissue or teats by nursing or other wounds to the skin. Prevent stressful conditions such as extreme temperatures, muddy, wet living conditions, and sudden changes in diet.

Periodically scrub and sanitize watering bowls to keep them free from contamination, microbes, parasites and algae. Studies showed that water intake as well as feed intake is reduced with dirty watering bowls.