Goat Care and Maintenance of Healthy Goats

Goats have to be one of the most entertaining farm animals to own. Knowing how to perform the required goat care is the most important first step to take, as you begin keeping goats. All breeds of goats need some sort of hoof care, proper nutrition, treatment for preventing worms, and more. Read on, for more information on goat care and maintaining a healthy herd.
Proper Goat Care When Raising Goats for Fiber

Two popular breeds in the fiber arena are Angora and Pygora goats. Both are registered breeds with beautiful, soft fiber. Their needs differ in some areas from other goat breeds such as the Pygmy and the Nigerian Dwarf, or Nubian, but all require certain regular health and wellness care. The Angoras and Pygoras, though, require a shearing of their fiber once or twice a year.

We bred Pygora goats for a few years, but decided to cut back on the size of our herd so that we could maintain them all in good health. Now, we own ten Pygoras and they yield quite enough soft beautiful fiber for our needs. Pygora fiber is soft and fine and we use it to blend into our sheep wool.
The Pygora goat breed, that we raise, is a cross between the Pygmy goat and the Angora. This results in a breed that has fiber but a smaller size. The fiber on fiber goats, needs to be harvested at least once a year, but we prefer to do the shearing twice a year. We found that not shearing in the fall leads to more matted fiber on the animal in the spring. Pygora fiber is very fine and lends softness and sheen to a yarn, when blended with other fleece.
Should you hire a professional shearer?

We spent many weekends each year shearing. We did get better at it but I would never say I reached a professional speed or quality. This is time consuming and hard on your back. Please keep this in mind before purchasing fiber goat breeds. The alternative is to hire a professional shearer to do the job. We went this route a year ago, and it has freed up so much time in our spring and fall schedules. Our sheep and goat shearer can do all of our animals (14) in one afternoon!

After shearing, sometimes, you can see lice living on the skin. We treat for lice twice a year after each shearing by using Pyrethrin powder rubbed into the back area, along the top line. Another product that kills lice on the skin is Ivermectin Pour-On for cattle.

Hoof Trimming is Essential Goat Care

Hoof trimming needs to be tended to every other month. Starting early in a goats life, will help make this less traumatic but don’t be surprised if they still resist. The back feet, especially, seem to be an issue for our goats. Even the older goats do not like having me lift up and hold their back foot for a trimming. I think it is because they can’t see me back there and it probably is a fight or flight response. It helps to have another person stand by their head and distract them with a treat while you trim the back feet.
In this picture you can see the overgrowth of the hoof.
A trimmed hoof should return the hoof to a smoother natural wedged sha

**Using a Stanchion or Milking Stand for**
Hoof Trimming

Putting the goat on a stand helps by making it easier on the person trimming.

I have done a number of hoof trimmings by having someone else hold the animal still, while I trim the hooves. This requires a lot more bending and reaching but can certainly get the job accomplished. I look at the stand as a great tool to have but we went many years without owning one, too. Gather all of your tools and some treats before you get started.
Some yummy treats for hoof trimming time on our farm, include honey nut cheerios type cereal, whole peanuts and apple and oat horse treats.
Some of the items I recommend having close by are, extra breakaway chain collars, the hoof clippers, yummy treats, an old rag to wipe mud off the hooves and a sturdy lead rope. Have a plastic container of corn starch ready, If you accidentally trim too close and cause a mild bleeding,
applying corn starch will stop the blood flow. Then I apply a
dab of antibiotic ointment and it takes care of the mishap. I
have never had a serious problem occur after a slight nick of
the hoof.

Using hoof clippers makes the job easier because they are
shaped to trim hooves. I wear sturdy gloves when doing the
hoof trim because the clippers are extremely sharp and animals
make sudden moves! I also have used Fisker’s Garden clippers
but the shape of the blade makes the job a bit more tricky.
For goat hoof trims I recommend this type of clipper.

Maintain a Goat Care Hoof Trim Schedule

Keeping up with the hoof trimming makes the job so much
easier. It is possible to bring a neglected goat back to some
measure of good hoof health, but it takes time and dedication.
I have missed a trimming and the amount of over growth is
pretty amazing. Plan to trim hooves at the minimum, every
other month.
Goat Care
How to Properly Maintain Your Herd
Health Maintenance in Goat Care

Keeping goats requires that their health needs are tended to on a regular basis. In addition to making sure that you are feeding a quality goat chow to supplement any grazing, and providing fresh water each day, there are vaccinations to be updated and occasional de-worming medication that needs to be administered. The vaccinations given and the worming schedule is something that every goat owner should read up on and make their own decision about.

If Goats Leave the Farm....

If you are going to take your goats to shows, county fairs and other events, your decision may be different than mine on these matters. I do not want to sway you one way or another on these issues by telling you our schedule. One site that I do recommend you check out is FiasCo Farm’s website. Clicking on the link will take you to their options of schedules for vaccinations and worming. If you are interested in using herbal natural supplements, we are now using these from Biteme Goat Treats.

On our farm, we have what is called a closed herd. We have not been regularly adding to the goat population, and our goats do not leave the farm unless they need an unexpected trip to the vet’s clinic. Because of this, we do not have a quarantine pen.
If you do plan to bring home new goats regularly, a quarantine or holding stall, would be a good thing to have. Waiting at least 30 days before allowing direct contact with your herd will give you time to see any signs of possible illness. When the new goats first arrive, worm them and include a treatment for cocci. Knowing what parasites and worms are common in goats in your area is important. Ask your veterinarian what parasite treatments they recommend. Not treating parasite infestations can lead to anemia and death in the goat herd.
Proper Feeding in Goat Care

Goats should not have full access to feed concentrates. Goats are very efficient browsers and can readily make use of many plants and growth on your property even if you don’t have grass pasture. They will stand on their hind legs to reach the branches and leaves they want and have a high tolerance to plants that other species find toxic. People often utilize a goat herd to clear poison ivy as it seems to be a favorite food of goats, with no complications. Goats can clear up your pastures in no time.

Should You Add Grain?

If you keep your goats in a barn or a dry lot with hay feeding, you might want to supplement with a small amount of properly balanced grain. The amount will vary depending on the size of your goat, but around a half a cup to a cup of grain per animal once a day is a good starting point. Goats can colic easily from over eating concentrate feeds.

Keep the feed in a metal trash can with a tight fitting lid somewhere that the goats do not have access to. Voracious eaters, as most goats tend to be, will eat without stopping, so make sure you secure the feed. Feeding hay should keep them happy and provide nutrition and roughage. Fresh drinking water should always be available.
The last thing I want to mention concerns feeding fiber goat breeds. If you should choose to raise a fiber breed of goat, their nutritional needs are more in line with sheep. For proper goat care remember that copper is toxic to sheep and fiber producing goats. When purchasing a commercial food, make sure you read the label carefully. The best choice is to feed Sheep and Lamb concentrate or a feed specifically formulated for sheep and goats in a mixed herd situation. This will eliminate the copper toxicity issue. Supplement your fiber animals minerals using the same care. You can read more about copper toxicity in sheep and goats here.
Keeping goats will certainly keep you on your toes. In return, your goats will reward you with endless amusement, goat cuddles, and possibly cute baby goats!

For information on dairy goats, and lots more goat info, please visit Better Hens and Gardens and Feather and Scale Farm.
Look for my books that cover goat care, *Keeping Sheep and Other Fiber Animals*, and *50 Do it Yourself Projects for Keeping Goats*. Both books are available here, in our shop and on Amazon.

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