

First Aid

by Kay Orlando, DVM

Once you have more than a few goats, it becomes evident that it is physically and financially impossible to take them to your veterinarian for every minor injury. It is important to have a first aid kit and to be able to evaluate injury or illness. Ask yourself, "Can I treat this, or should I have the goat examined by a veterinarian? Is it an emergency, or can it wait until office hours?"

Some First Aid Equipment

- Antibacterial scrub
- Antibiotic eye ointment
- Antibiotic ointment
- Antibiotic powder
- Aspirin
- Bandage materials: Conforming gauze, Telfa pads, Vet Rap®
- Epinephrine
- Milk of Magnesia®
- Penicillin
- Sterile Eye Wash
- Tetanus antitoxin

Cuts and Abrasions

A common injury of this type is trimming hooves too short and cutting into the quick. The bleeding often stops by itself without treatment. Occasionally, the foot needs to be bandaged with a pressure wrap of gauze and Vet Rap®. Most cuts do not get infected, but you may give a preventative penicillin injection if the cut is deep. Make sure the goat is current on tetanus vaccine. Expect the goat to limp for a day or two.

Cuts occur even in the safest pasture. If a cut is completely through the skin and the edges are separated, sutures are needed. These wounds can be bandaged until you can get the goat to your veterinarian. Apply some antibiotic ointment, a telfa pad, and wrap with gauze and Vet Rap®. If the injury oozes blood, apply pressure to stop the bleeding. An injury that spurts blood needs immediate veterinary attention, as an artery may have been severed.

Unless a wound is bleeding heavily, you can wait until regular office hours for veterinary attention. Make sure the wound is kept clean and the tetanus booster is up to date. A penicillin injection should be given if the cut penetrates through the skin.

Eye Injuries

Any eye abnormality should receive prompt attention. Minor injuries can progress quickly into serious eye damage. Weed awns, hay and straw commonly become lodged under an eyelid. If not promptly removed, corneal lacerations and possible eye loss can

occur. Early signs of a foreign body in the eye are squinting and excessive tears followed by closure of the eye and pus accumulation. Flush the eye with sterile eye wash, then pull out the lid to locate the foreign body. Antibiotic ointment should be used in the eye for several days after removing the foreign body. The cornea is extremely sensitive, and any injury causes a great deal of pain, squinting and tears. A veterinarian should examine the eye if a corneal lesion is suspected. Never use eye ointment containing cortisone if there is a possibility of corneal injury.

Lameness

A sudden limp is usually due to an injury. Examine the limb for pain, swelling and punctures. If you suspect a puncture, treat with penicillin and re-evaluate the injury in 12 hours. If you suspect a strain of pulled muscle, give aspirin at the rate of 5 gr/ 60 lb, rest the goat and re-evaluate in 24 hours. You can usually wait 1 or 2 days to see if the limp improves after examination and treatment. Once again, make sure the tetanus booster is up-to-date if a puncture is suspected.

Complete inability to use a leg is more serious. When this occurs suddenly with a good deal of pain, a fracture should be suspected. Keep the goat as quiet as possible until a veterinarian can examine it. Some type of leg support may be necessary if the goat needs to be transported to a clinic.

Diarrhea

Diarrhea can range from a dog-like stool to watery and explosive. Most breeders will have occasion to deal with diarrhea from a number of causes.

Goats probably have pellets, instead of cow pats, due to muscular contractions as ingesta moves through the large intestine. Through regurgitation and cud chewing, goats have a very fine particle size of ingesta, and this may also be a factor. Moisture is absorbed through the intestinal walls as ingesta travels through it. Normal goat pellets are between 0.5 to 1.5 cm in diameter. I consider anything other than hard goat pellets to be diarrhea, with the exception of neonates.

A healthy digestive tract is very important. Fecal consistency is an easily observable indication of digestive tract health and some problems elsewhere.

Adults: Pasty, watery or dog-like feces are abnormal and may indicate: parasitism, Johne's disease, overeating, displaced abomasum, enterotoxemia, or a diet that contains too much concentrate and not enough roughage. Blood in the stool is uncommon but can occur in enterotoxemia and coccidiosis. Whole grain is not usually seen in the feces unless the goat is on a very high concentrate level. Feces containing mucus indicate constipation or a prolonged time in the large intestine due to disease condition elsewhere in the body.

Older goats usually get diarrhea from overeating a high carbohydrate source, like grain. They have rumen acidosis and a bacterial imbalance in the gut. Give 2 to 3 ounces of Milk of Magnesia, take away all grain and feed palatable hay. If the goat is

off feed and running a temperature, penicillin can be given. Such cases should turn around in 12 hours. A goat that is down and depressed should be seen by your veterinarian.

Kids: Coccidia is an uncommon cause of diarrhea in kids less than one week old; umbilical and bacterial gut infections are more usual. Bacteria can enter the umbilicus at birth to multiply and cause problems in the liver. Long-term, aggressive antibiotic therapy is necessary to correct the problem.

Escherichia coli is the usual culprit in intestinal bacterial infections in kids. This organism enters the body by mouth. Antibiotics are needed. Overeating also causes kids to scour.

Diarrhea in kids over two weeks old is usually due to either coccidia or overeating. The young kid is treated as a simple-stomached animal, as its rumen is not highly developed. It is important to find and treat the cause as soon as possible. Monitor kids closely.

Oral sulfa (Albon®) can be used for coccidiosis and bacterial bowel infections. This is a good product to start with, especially if the cause of the diarrhea is unknown. Re-evaluate the kid often, and get professional help early if it is not responding.

While microscopic examination of the feces is important to diagnose and monitor intestinal parasitism, daily gross examination of feces can be a valuable aid in determining the general health of the goat.

Excerpts from:

Kinne, Maxine, ed. [Pygmy Goats: Best of Memo 3 \(1988-1996\)](#)

National Pygmy Goat Association: pp 107

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