

Housing

by Lydia Hale

Many books and articles have been written about housing for dairy goats, but there is little material available that pertains specifically to Pygmy goats. Much of the available information about dairy goats is varied [. . .] but all the authors are in agreement on two essential requirements; shelter from wind, rain and snow; and freedom from stress. Pygmy goats are no exception in their needs for these two things.

In my recent travels to various parts of the country, it was interesting to see how very differently herds of Pygmies are managed. [. . .] Breeders in the southern sections of the United States need to provide only very basic shed type structures [. . .] while in the northern areas, it is an entirely different matter. Substantial barns are a matter of course to provide protection from wind, rain, snow, and severe cold for not only the goats, but also their owners who appreciate some comfort while doing the daily chores.

In planning a barn for Pygmy goats, ease of cleaning and finances may determine just what structure is feasible. No matter how simple the housing is to be, it should be large enough to accommodate the herd without crowding (allowing approximately 15 to 20 square feet per animal), and it should also be draft free [. . .].

Pygmies love niches to which to jump and sleep. Ours are constructed against the walls of the stalls about two feet up off the floor, and the area underneath is a perfect haven for young kids if the older goats get restless and rough in their play. Built-in hay mangers keep the hay up off the floor and cut down, somewhat, on the amount of hay wasted – a problem that seems universal with goats. So much for the mistaken idea that goats will eat everything! They are by far the finickiest eaters of all animals. Once the hay has dropped on the ground it becomes “bedding” fit only to play or lie in [. . .].

Drinking water, fresh and clean, is essential to all goats and they should be encouraged to drink as much as possible. Several years ago, Bob gave me the nicest Christmas present ever – a hot water heater for the barn. Now we can easily provide warm water all winter, and how they love it!

The flooring in the goat stalls can be of wood, concrete or, best yet, clay. The wood will hold the odor of urine and will rot out eventually. Cement, although easy to keep clean, is cold and damp. We have found that a thick layer of clay on top of a gravel base is perfect for goats. It packs down into a hard surface which can be swept out when the stalls are cleaned; it holds no odor, and a new layer of clay can be applied every two years or so to freshen it up. Any moisture soaks through the deep bedding and on down to the gravel base. We have no problems with too much moisture in the air even when the barn is closed completely in mid winter. Warm, moist air can cause respiratory problems and lead to serious illness. Good ventilation and fresh air are a must for goats.

Exercise yards, grazing areas and/or paddocks surrounded by good fencing are best located adjacent to the sheds of barns where the goats can have access to their stalls and come and go at will.

[. . .]

Good secure fencing is a worthwhile investment. It not only keeps the herd where it should be, but also protects from outside predators [. . .].

Excerpts from:

Hale, Lydia, and Ellen Kritzman, eds. [Pygmy Goats: Best of Memo \(1976-1981\)](#)

National Pygmy Goat Association: pp 22-23

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