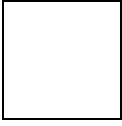


# How to Care for Milk Goats



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A milk or dairy goat can provide milk for your family. In fact, more families around the world drink goat milk than any other kind. Goat's milk also makes wonderful cheeses. You can keep a single goat or a small herd, depending on the time and resources you have to commit. Goats are usually friendly and require consistent though not complicated care. Before purchasing a goat, consider the various breeds available and investigate your local laws and regulations.

Difficulty: Moderately Easy  
Instructions

## Things You'll Need:

- Commercial feed
- Hay
- Trace mineralized salt
- Milking supplies
- Housing for your goat
- Straw
- Vaccines and deworming medications
- Hoof trimmer

### 1. Step 1

Check your milk goat twice daily for signs of illness. Look for unclouded eyes, normal breathing, normal stools, regular appetite with no problems eating or drinking, normal movement and an interest in her surroundings, normal udder temperature and a lack of any other signs of illness or injury. Observe her coat for signs of illness, injury or infections from ringworm or lice. Evaluate her temperature, pulse, respiration and rumen (the part of the goat's stomach where grasses and foliage are stored) and call your veterinarian if you suspect illness.

### 2. Step 2

Feed your goat a healthy diet consisting of an appropriate commercial grain feed mixture, quality alfalfa or clover hay and supplemental plants. Provide free access to clean water and salt with trace minerals. Your goat will need about 2 to 3 pounds of commercial feed and 3 pounds of hay daily, possibly more if she is producing a large quantity of milk.

### 3. Step 3

Milk your goat every 12 hours while she is eating her grain in a separate, clean area. Wash your goat's udder with warm water or a disinfectant solution about one minute before milking, then dry thoroughly. Wash and disinfect your hands and any equipment. Discard the first milk from each teat. Collect milk in a clean container, and then cool and refrigerate promptly. Empty your goat's udder completely during milking to maintain milk production.

### 4. Step 4

House your goat in a shed that is clean, dry, well ventilated, protected from adverse weather and offers plenty of room. Cover the floor with clean straw and change it regularly. Dispose of waste properly; you can compost goat manure.

### 5. Step 5

Provide regular vaccinations and deworming for your goat on the schedule recommended by your veterinarian.

### 6. Step 6

Trim your goat's hooves quarterly or as needed.

## Tips & Warnings

- Ask your veterinarian about any supplements she recommends for your goat such as selenium or vitamin E.
- Breed your goat for the first time when she weighs about 80 pounds or is about 75 percent of full-grown size for her breed.
- Allow your goat's milk production to dry up about 6 to 8 weeks before she is due to give birth after subsequent breeding.
- Observe your goat's milk for signs of blood; this could indicate mastitis or recent trauma to the udder.

## References

- Cornell University: Routine Health Care for Your Dairy Doe
- Oregon State University Extension Service: Dairy Goats for Family Milk Supply
- Washington State University: Your Dairy Goat

## Resources

- American Dairy Goat Association
- University of Arkansas: Herd Health Program for Dairy Goats

- Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service: Let's Learn About Dairy Goats and Goat's Milk