

## Normal Values

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It is as important to notice your normal, healthy goats as it is to notice your sick ones. Many articles are written about various diseases of goats with signs and treatments being discussed thoroughly. But, how can you tell if your goat is sick if you don't know when it is healthy?

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|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| Rectal temperature | 102.5 – 104 °F (39.3 – 40 °C) |
| Pulse              | 60 – 80 per minute            |
| Respiration        | 15 – 30 per minute            |
| Puberty            | 4 – 12 months                 |
| Estrous cycle      | 18 – 23 days                  |
| Estrum             | 12 – 36 hours                 |
| Gestation          | 145 – 153 days                |

A goat's normal temperature will vary between 102.5 – 104 °F. An individual may tend to have a normal temperature at one end or the other, but temperature readings within this range can be considered normal. At the risk of offending most people reading this, I should remind you that temperatures must be taken rectally; goats will not hold thermometers under their tongues.

Pulse and respiration can vary greatly depending on the goat's nervous state when the rates are taken. The respiratory rate can be easily taken by watching the rib cage movement and counting the number of breaths per minute. A highly excited animal will have a higher rate than "normal", so use a little common sense and allow for variations with circumstances.

A pulse rate is more difficult to take. It is easiest to take a heart rate (which should be the same as the pulse rate) with a stethoscope and count the number of beats per minute. You can also feel for heartbeats by holding your fingers tightly over the area of the heart near the bottom and front of the chest. With a little practice, you can take an actual pulse rate by feeling for the pulse on the inside of the rear leg up near the groin; you probably need someone to show you just where to feel the first time.

Puberty is the age at which an animal becomes sexually mature. Remember that sexual, physical and mental maturity are entirely different things. Sexual maturity means that a doe is capable of becoming pregnant, and that a buck is capable of impregnating a doe. The normal range for goat puberty is 4 – 12 months, but bear in mind that goats don't read books or lists of normal values. Does have become pregnant at two months of age, and it may have been litter brothers that got them in that condition. The key thing to learn from this normal value is not to believe printed lists and to separate buck kids and adult bucks from doe kids by two months of age.

A female goat is “in season” (estrus) every 18 – 23 days. This interval between seasons is the length of the estrous cycle. A doe is in estrus for 12 – 36 hours and is receptive to a buck for breeding during this time. She ovulates 24 – 36 hours after the beginning of estrus. Some does have very quiet seasons and you may not know they are in season if you don’t have a buck close by to inform you.

Gestation, or pregnancy, lasts 145 – 153 days, and is counted from the day of the breeding to the day the kids are delivered. Kids born at 145 – 153 days are usually quite healthy and ready for life. Kids born at 139 – 144 days of gestation will be immature and their chances of survival diminished, and kids born prior to 139 days are not likely to survive beyond a few hours.

By learning these normal value ranges, by getting to know your own individual animals, and by remembering that lists of normal values are only guidelines, you will be one step ahead at recognizing illness if it strikes your herd.

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Excerpts from:

Kinne, Maxine, ed. [Pygmy Goats: Best of Memo 2 \(1982-1987\)](#)

National Pygmy Goat Association: pp 122

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