

GETTING STARTED WITH GOATS

a complete guide by DaNelle Wolford



How to



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PART 1

understanding the basics & choosing a breed

SO YOU WANT TO OWN A GOAT, EH? WHEN I FIRST DOVE INTO THE WORLD OF GOATS, I NOTICED THERE WAS A SHOCKING LACK OF INFO ON THE INTERNET ON HOW TO RAISE & CARE FOR THEM. NOT ANYMORE:) HOPEFULLY MY KNOWLEDGE OF GOATS WILL INSPIRE YOU TO GET SOME OF YOUR OWN.

TERMINOLOGY:

Female goats are called DOES or DOELINGS as babies. Male goats are called BUCKS or BUCKLINGS as babies. If a male goat has been castrated (neutered) they are known as a WETHER. A baby goat is called a kid. When a doe gives birth, it's usually called a "kidding" or a "freshening".

HOW YOU GET MILK:

The ONLY way to get milk from a goat is to get a female doe pregnant so she can have babies first. Each time a goat has babies, this kick starts her milk production and is known as a FRESHENING. It's very similar to humans. At first the mother has a lot of milk, but then gradually over the course of about a year, the amount of milk reduces. Typically, goats have their babies in the spring, then at 8 weeks you can sell the babies and enjoy milk for almost an entire year. You'll want to breed your goat again in the fall if you want to freshen her milk again in the spring. Don't worry, you can still milk a doe while she is pregnant, but you'll have to let her dry up 2 months before she is due so she can build up some nutritional reserves for her offspring.

DEBUNKING GOAT MYTHS:

Goats will not eat your lawn mower, your outdoor furniture, your trampoline, or your kid's toys. They may chew on the bark of a tree and will eat the fruit that falls off (although my goats don't like citrus), but that's about it. Female goats (or DOES) are not mean and won't try to head butt you or bite. Male goats that are castrated (WETHERS) are nice too. Male goats that are intact (BUCKS) can be aggressive and bite/head butt. But I'm sure there are some nice ones out there, too.

HOW MUCH SPACE DO GOATS NEED?

One goat requires at least 250 sq. feet of space. What you have to remember though, is that goats are herd animals, so they prefer a buddy with them. One goat by itself will be VERY loud, trust me. You'll have 24-7 bleating from a lone goat, while two goats are so happy together that you'll hardly know they're there. So, always, ALWAYS get at least 2 goats and give them at least 500 sq. feet of space together.

WILL A GOAT NEED A PASTURE or WILL IT MOW MY GRASS?

Goats are browsers, not grazers, which means that they don't jump up and down in excitement over a yard of grass. They won't really mow your lawn UNLESS you don't feed them. Goats prefer alfalfa hay as their main dietary source, and while they'll nibble at grass, they really won't chomp at it unless it's their only source of nutrition. Could you theoretically force your goats to eat grass? Yes. I've done this before. Your goats will cry out for a few days wondering where their precious rich alfalfa went, but they will realize grass is what's for dinner and will start to (reluctantly) graze. Typically goats that are wethers (castrated males) are raised on grass, but milking does (females you're going to milk) simply can't get enough nutrients from grass alone. If you have a large pasture full of a variety of foliage, then they'll have a much better chance at getting their nutritional requirements.

CAN MALES & FEMALES BE KEPT TOGETHER?

This is another question that I get A LOT. Let me break it down for you...the only male that can be kept with females 24-7 are castrated males, called wethers. These male goats have had their testicles removed and are calmer and act exactly the same as

a female in behavior. The only time a breeding male (called a buck) and a female (called a doe) can be kept together is during breeding time.

Here are a few different scenarios of goats that can be kept together:

Does (females) & Does (females) = YES

Does (females) & Wethers (castrated males) = YES

Does (females) & Bucks (breeding males) = only during breeding time.

Pregnant Doe (female) & Bucks = NO

Mother Doe with babies (females with babies) = They should be kept by themselves until babies hit 4 weeks of age, and then, they can be put with other Does (females) & Wethers (castrated males).

Does with their babies should NEVER be put together with bucks because the bucks will VERY LIKELY kill the babies. The same goes with a pregnant doe. Once you are sure she's pregnant, it's time to keep her away from the buck. He will agitate her and bully her for the duration of her pregnancy because of the hormones she is producing during this time.

CHOOSING A BREED:

When it comes to choosing a breed of goat, you need to know which goats are good for which purpose.

There are dairy breeds – Nubian, La Mancha, Alpine, Oberhasli, Toggenburg, Saanen, Sable, & Nigerian Dwarf goats.

There are meat breeds – Spanish, Tennessee, Boer, & Kiko goats.

There are some fancy pantsy breeds that produce fibers for fabric – Angora & Cashmere goats.

And then there are the fun pet breeds – Pygmy & Fainting goats.

What about mixed breeds? Mixed breeds are fine, and actually, they will be cheaper in comparison to purebred registered goats. The pros are that you can buy a goat sooner (because you won't have to wait around for a particular breed to come up for sale) and you can spend less money. The cons are that if you ever plan on showing your goat in the future at a fair or FFA event, you won't be able to if it's a mixed breed. The goat registries (yes, they're a real thing)

won't register your goat unless it's purebred, with one exception. Nubian-Nigerians are also called Mini-Nubians, and are beginning to be recognized as their own breed.

Which breed is my favorite? My very first goat was a Nigerian Dwarf. Nigerians Dwarf goats are miniature goats. They are adorable and hilarious and naughty. They also have the sweetest tasting milk. My advice is that if you're looking to get started with goat's milk and you're worried about the milk tasting "goaty," go with Nigerians. They will hands down always have the best milk. We've since added Nubians to the farm and I like this breed as well. They are much bigger than Nigerians but gentle, and not nearly as mischievous as our Nigerians. We like Nubian milk and we think it tastes great, but it's definitely not as sweet as Nigerian milk. LaMancha & Alpine breeds are my 3rd and 4th favorites as milking goats. We like the milk and the personalities of the goats themselves.

VISITING FARMS:

When you visit the farm to purchase your goat, check out the surroundings. Is the place clean? Is it dirty? Is there a "normal" amount of animals, or does the place seem overrun and the seller seem like an animal hoarder? The one thing you have to remember with animals is that they do best when living in a natural environment with plenty of space. You don't want to see animals in small cages, living in large amounts of poop, or too many animals in the same area. If the owner has provided a clean, healthy living conditions for their goats, chances are, they have put time and care into their animals.

Be sure to ask the owner for test results that show the herd is CAE and CL free. CAE and CL are goat (and sheep) diseases that can really make them sick down the road.

The most important thing to look for is a goat that enjoys being fed and touched by humans. If you visit a farm and the goat you want runs the other way (and a group of you has to chase it down!), then you'll probably want to choose another goat. If the goat is friendly and playful, not skittish or wild, then you've found your goat! Trust me, a skittish goat is near impossible to train – ask me how I know ;)

THE COST OF A GOAT:

OPTION #1 - Buy a baby goat doeling.

The cheapest way is to buy a young doeling, as young as 8 weeks old (that's the time when they can be weaned from their mother). Goat breeders usually have a lot of babies around the same time and are willing to offer package deals for two or more goats. The only con with this is you'll have to wait AT LEAST a year to a year and a half before you can breed, then you'll have to wait 5 months until they have babies and start giving milk. For Nigerian Dwarfs, you can find a young doeling for \$150-\$300 depending on their parents background, milking star awards, and colorings. Goats with blue eyes usually cost more. *TIP:* The most important thing is FRIENDLINESS of the baby goat. You don't want one that runs away and is afraid of everything. Although this can be sometimes hard to tell because baby goats like to RUN, haha. As long as they will eat from your hand, you're okay.

OPTION #2 - Buy a junior doeling.

Sometimes you can get lucky and find an older doeling (6 months to 1 year old) and skip ahead a bit. Female does that are older, but haven't been bred their first time yet are called JUNIOR DOES. Sometimes you can get lucky and have them bred BEFORE you purchase them. This way, you only have to wait 5 months until you have fresh milk. The only con with this is it gets more expensive as they get older, and then you have to tack on a breeding fee. I bought a Nigerian Dwarf goat this way for \$400 total. Five months later, she had babies and it was perfect. Although we did pay top dollar at first. *TIP:* You'll want one that is friendly and NOT SKITTISH, and you'll want to look at HER MOTHER'S TEAT SIZE and production. Don't even worry about the junior doeling's teats, they are always small before they have babies, but just be sure to check the mother.

OPTION #3 - Buy a senior doe in milk.

The final way to purchase is to look for a FEMALE DOE ALREADY IN MILK. This is what I tried to do at first. I "thought" this was the easy way, but in the end I just kept getting does that nobody wanted and had problems. Sometimes you can find one that is a good producer and no problems, but more often than not, the breeder is downsizing the herd, and the doe your about to purchase is at the bottom of the list. You'll find these does are cheaper, like \$150-\$200. *TIP:* If you still want to pursue this option, look for traits that will be worth having. You want a goat that ISN'T SKITTISH, that is producing the correct amount of milk for the season (see below), and that has a good teat length (1 1/2 inch or longer). You'll also want to make sure she doesn't have any visible signs of infection or skin disorders.

THE COST TO KEEP A GOAT:

Nigerians eat 2 lb. of feed a day, which is 4 c. of the alfalfa/bermuda blend pellets. Regular-sized goats eat twice this amount. We have figured that it costs us about \$12 a month in hay/pellets to feed one Nigerian Dwarf goat. If they are giving 7-15 gallons a month of milk, then it comes out to an average of \$1.50/gallon of milk. This is assuming your only costs are the basics though. You need to add on the costs for minerals, herbs, wipes, filters, and the occasional Ultrasound (\$20) or blood test (\$5-\$25).

BUT you also have to remember that goats have babies every year that you can sell. Imagine your goat has three babies and you sell each for \$200. That MORE than covers the costs of a goat for one year.

In the end, goats pretty much pay for themselves. All you have to invest to get that raw, nutritional milk is your research and your time.

PART 2

gathering your supplies & bringing your goat home

SUPPLEMENTS & EXTRA CARE

- **Minerals** - [These minerals](#) will help support any missing mineral gaps in their diet. [Kelp meal](#) is also another good source of trace minerals for goats. You don't have to do both, just one is fine.
- **Deworming** - I use herbs to naturally deworm my goats. I purchase [an herbal dewormer blend](#) and it lasts me at least a year!
- **Drench Syringe** - For giving different herbal mixes.
- **Vaccines** - I don't vaccinate my goats, but I want to list it here in case you feel like you should.
- **Testing for Diseases** - I go over what you need for this in Part 3 of this e-book.
- **Hoof shears** - You'll need to trim your goat's hooves every few months. Here's my goat hoof trimming [tutorial](#) and here are [my favorite shears](#).

MILKING SUPPLIES

- **Goat Milking Stand** - You can make your own here with these [free goat stand plans](#).
- **Feeder** - This [goat feeder](#) will go on the stand.
- **Goat Hobble** (optional) - Not every goat needs to be hobbled (back legs tied together) in order to be milked, but if you have a goat that kicks more than you can manage, try this [goat hobble](#).
- **Stainless steel Pail** - When you're dealing with milk, it's important that you use a seamless stainless steel [pail](#). This will make sure that the pail can be cleaned well between each use.
- **Udder Wipes** - We make our own homemade [udder wipes](#), but you can also purchase [pre-made udder wipes here](#).
- **Milk Strainer & Filters** - After you milk your goat, you'll definitely want to strain it with a stainless steel [strainer & filters](#).
- **Jars & Lids** (to store milk)
- **Teat Dip or Homemade Balm** - [Teat dips](#) are designed to clean and protect the teat between milking times. You can purchase chemical teat dips, but I like to just make a [homemade udder balm](#).

PREGNANCY & BIRTHING SUPPLIES

- **A bale of straw** to lay down for your goat to deliver on. I would recommend waiting until about a week before delivery to lay this down so it can be fresh & clean.
- **Empty feed bags** - these are great to use as trash bags or to lay a kid on top of after delivery.
- **Puppy pads or Chux pads** ([where to buy](#)) - you'll definitely be using these to dry off the kids after delivery.
- **Clean towels**
- **Flashlight** - It's better to be prepared if your doe delivers at night.
- **Scissors** (sterilize before using) - Use for cutting umbilical cords. I usually wait until the mother chews the umbilical cord, then I trim the cord down if it needs it.
- **Betadine** ([where to buy](#)) - I like to rub this on the cords, whether or not I've clipped them.
- **Homemade wipes** ([see my recipe](#)) - These are very simple to make and really help wiping off baby goat faces, mother goats behinds, and your hands.
- **Disposable gloves** ([where to buy](#))
- **Nasal Aspirator** ([where to buy](#))
- **KY Jelly** - ([where to buy](#))
- **Homemade Udder Balm** ([how to make](#))
- **Nutritional support for your doe** - After delivery, I like to give my doe a small amount of grain mixed with molasses and a bit of honey to give her a boost of energy. Also, it's good to offer some fresh warm water as well.
- **Keto-drench** - ([where to buy](#)) Good boost after freshening. It is a good one to stock up on and keep
- **Mo' Milk Mix** ([where to buy](#)) - this is a great herbal mix to help your doe's milk come in fully. You don't NEED this at all, your doe can produce milk just fine, but it does help give a natural 'boost' to her milk supply.

SUPPLIES YOU'LL NEED FOR BOTTLE-FEEDING A BABY GOAT

Lamb/Kid nipple (works with any baby bottle or water bottle)

Goat milk replacement

Colostrum replacement (If your baby didn't drink from mom for at least a few days)

SHELTER & FENCING

Fencing can be as simple or as extravagant as you want, but just be sure to **follow these rules** to keep your goat from breaking out.

BRINGING YOUR GOAT HOME

An animal that is brought to a new place goes into shock for a few days. Everything they've ever known is gone and they're in an unfamiliar place, so it will take 3-5 days for them to start to settle down.

If you're bringing a new baby goat home, here are some **detailed care guidelines**.

NORMAL BEHAVIOR

Most goats will bleat more than normal in their first few days. They are confused so this is a very normal behavior. As long as they have access to food/water/shelter, they will be fine.

It's also very important that they have a friend. It helps a lot if you buy two goats from the same far, because although they are still in shock in their new surroundings, they feel comfort in having each other.

TRANSPORTING YOUR GOAT

You don't need a trailer or truck to bring a goat home. Most people bring goats home in the back of an SUV or car (depending on the size of your goat). Simply lay a tarp down and tie the goat so he/she can't jump around in the seats. We've even transported goats in large dog crates.

INTRODUCING THEM TO THE HERD

If you have other four-legged animals on your property, it's a good idea to keep them separated

from your new goats for a few days. This way they can become familiar through the fence first before they start head butting each other.

Head butting is a normal behavior in goats because goats need to establish a herd order. Once they all understand who is the queen of the herd, they won't fight anymore except during feeding time.

CAN GOATS LIVE WITH OTHER ANIMALS?

Goats are happy with sheep, horses, & cows because they consider these animals companions. Chickens, ducks, & geese are well-tolerated by goats, but they don't consider them a companion so if you have one goat with a bunch of chickens, it still won't be happy.

Goats and dogs simply DO NOT MIX. Goats consider any kind of "wolf" a predator and won't ever be happy with one around. This doesn't mean you need to get rid of your dogs, it just means that they won't bond to them. Goats will almost always head butt dogs and display aggressive behavior towards them. The only exception to this rule is a well-trained livestock guardian dog. Livestock Guardian Dogs establish themselves as the herd "queen", and are the boss of the bunch. They keep everybody in order and so the goats will tolerate this leader of the herd.

DIET CHANGES

It's always best to make diet changes slowly, so make sure to ask the previous owner what the goat is eating and keep on track with that until you've switched slowly to what you're feeding them. FYI, goats that are brought to a new home typically WILL NOT EAT for the first 2 days or so. They will drink water, but aren't hungry because they are going through emotional stress of being re-located.

Emergency Phone Numbers It's a good idea to keep the phone numbers of seasoned "goat" expert friends in case you have a complicated delivery. Also, keep the phone number of a local vet in case you have an emergency.

PART 3

feeding your goat & holistic care

WATERING & FEEDING

Goats aren't like dogs. You can't just go to a feed store, purchase a bag of goat feed and think that will supply your goat with all it needs. The bags of "goat feed" at the feed stores SHOULD NOT be fed to goats as a primary diet. Even though it comes in large bags, it's for VERY SMALL treats and are meant to be fed in VERY SMALL AMOUNTS, about a handful a day. Please, please do not feed "goat feed" as a primary food source because your goat will get very sick and die from bloating.

Goats primarily eat hay and will get ALL of their nutritional needs from hay alone. There are a few types of hay, namely alfalfa hay, timothy hay, bermuda hay, or sometimes you'll find a mix of a couple of those in the bale. There is also hay in the form of pellets and goats do well with those, too.

You can choose to feed your goats 100% hay from bales or choose to feed them 100% hay in the form of pellets, but we prefer a mix of both. We like to primarily feed pellets, and then give hay to them every night. The long stems in hay helps their rumen (stomach) work more efficiently and overall we notice this combo makes them healthier.

Recently, we've been feeding our goats **Chaffhaye** instead of hay bales. Chaffhaye is a bagged alfalfa that's been misted with molasses (a great source of iron, minerals, & B vitamins) and fermented for a few days before bagging. This special form of hay is designed to help the goats' digestive system utilize the hay better and we've noticed not only an increase in milk, but also a healthier coat & less bloating when they eat this. It also comes in bags that can be stored for many months, which is a big bonus for us. (FYI, at first our goats turned their noses up at it, but after a couple weeks, they devoured it and preferred it over pellets or regular hay.)

Here's a breakdown of what we feed our goats:

60% hay, in the form of pellets, a blend of alfalfa & bermuda or alfalfa & timothy (comes in bales, check your local feed stores)

20% hay, in the form of bales or Chaffhaye, to supply the long stems of foliage they need for a healthy rumen.

15% pasture/weeds/grassy area/leafy tree branches we cut down. Since we only live on an acre, our goats don't have huge pastures to eat from like a lot of other farms. If you have more land, great! Goats love to forage, so let them eat as much as they want and adjust their other food accordingly.

5% grain (comes in 40 lb. bags, check your local feed stores) Grain is only necessary if your goat is pregnant or in milk. Even then you'll only give about a handful or two per day. We don't feed grain to our babies or non-milking goats.

BE SURE TO SUPPLY THEM WITH fresh, clean water, at all times. You can add a 1/4 c. of apple cider vinegar to their water each day, it's a good source of probiotics and helps boost their immunity.

TREATS DURING MILKING

We usually give a couple handfuls of grain, another handful of **black oil sunflower seeds** and chopped carrots. You can also give pumpkin seeds or flax seeds.

VACCINES

You'll get a better idea of why we don't vaccinate here on our farm after [reading my full article on vaccinations for goats](#), but the short story is because we have a very small herd of goats (5), and we have supplies on hand for any disease they could possibly contract, there's not a huge need to vaccinate. We also keep our goats' immunity high by feeding an organic diet, feeding very little grain, treating holistically with herbs, etc.

In the article I link to above, there's also good info on which supplies to keep on hand to protect against or test these diseases.

DEHORNING

This is a somewhat controversial subject. Some people keep their goats horns, but we choose to disbud our baby goats when they are 1 week old. You can read the details of [how we do this here](#).

COMMON GOAT DISEASES & HOW TO AVOID THEM

There are a handful of goat diseases that we routinely test for. Some people will call a vet each year, but we test our goats ourselves. We draw the blood ourselves and send it to a lab to make sure our herd is free of these diseases. You can read more about the [goat diseases & how to test for them here](#).

HERBAL DEWORMING

Goats will always have a certain level of parasites in them, no matter how often you deworm them. The main goal is to manage the levels and make sure they have very low numbers.

We use an [herbal dewormer blend](#) and it lasts me at least a year!

Another good thing to do is to incorporate pasture rotation with your goats. This helps give them fresh grass each week. [Read my full article on it here](#).

HERBAL REMEDIES

There are lots of different powdered herbal remedies for goats, and I detail them all out [in this article here](#).

ESSENTIAL OILS

I'm all about using essential oils in hundreds of ways here on the farm, so it's a no-brainer that I'd use them for my goats. Here are a few of my go-to's:

- **Udder Balm** [Recipe here](#).
- **Fly Spray for Barn & on the animal** [Recipe here](#).
- **Lice** Dust them with DE (diatomaceous earth), Wash with ACV (apple cider vinegar), shave the goats if the weather permits, make a spray with water containing a few drops of the essential oils of melaleuca & lavender.
- **De-Worming** OI use a combo of powdered herbs & essential oils in what I lovingly refer to as my "goat smoothie". [Full video & recipe here](#).
- **Tummy problems** Ginger, Peppermint, or the DigestZen blend.
- **Mastitis** Garlic internally & Melaleuca/Peppermint rubbed on the udder.
- **Increase milk** Fennel
- **Any Skin Problems** Lavender & Frankincense

EXTREME TEMPERATURES

Goats have been around for a very long time, and so they've evolved to handle extreme temperatures as adults. Young kids are the ones that have more difficulty in extreme situations. It's a good idea to build a good shelter for the cold and provide cool grassy shade for the heat.

PART 4

breeding, kidding, & milking your goat

In order for their lactation to start up (often called freshening), you've got to get that female goat (often called a doe) of yours a boyfriend to whisper sweet nothings in her ear.

SOME FACTS ABOUT GOAT BREEDING CYCLES:

- Male goats can breed as young as 7 weeks old. This doesn't mean that they should be bred, but it's definitely possible for him to get his sister and mother pregnant, so it's important to remove bucks from females at 7 weeks old!
- Male goats (called bucks) can breed pretty much any time. They are ready to go 24-7, except in extreme weather conditions. They won't breed, however, just for fun. They'll only breed when they can smell that the female is in "heat".
- Bucks can go into a "rut" which basically means they get a surge of hormones and ready to breed before a doe is ready. Sometimes just them going into "rut" will make the females go into heat. During rut, bucks will show wild dominance and do some crazy hilarious things like snort, spit, urinate on themselves to make themselves more smelly, and even drink their urine. Yum.
- Female goats (called does) go into heat every 21 days and lasts about 1-3 days. Some breeds, like Nigerians, Boers, Spanish & Fainting, Pygmies and (sometimes) Nubians can breed year round. Most other dairy breeds are seasonal breeders, which means they will only go into heat every 21 days in the Fall from about August to January.
- Full-size dairy goats can be bred when they reach 8 months (or 80 lbs.) I usually shoot for around 1 year old before breeding on all my goats (large or small breed).
- Signs of heat can be wagging the tail, mounting other does, letting other does mount her, fighting, clear (wet or dried) mucosal discharge from her

vagina, or yelling (bleating) for no reason.

- The goat gestation period is 5 months (roughly 150 days - give or take a few).
- Goats can have anywhere from 1-5 kids in a litter. The average is 2-3. Pretty amazing, huh?
- Most people breed their goats once a year to maintain their milk supply.
- You can still milk a doe while she is pregnant, although it is wise to let her dry up about 2 months before she is set to deliver so her body can rest and build up nutritional reserves for the babies.
- A doe can produce babies for as long as she lives, which is typically around 10-12 years, although there can be more complications as they get older.
- A doe can DEFINITELY get pregnant while she is lactating.

BREEDING YOUR GOATS:

They have a natural instinct to breed, and they're pretty fast at it. Once you put the buck and doe in heat together, the buck will act interested instantly and being pawing and stomping. If she urinates, he'll probably put his face in the stream. Yeah, a little gross, I know. The doe will wag her tail and stand still when the buck tries to mount her, although goats do like a little foreplay and may run around together for a while first. In my experience, goats like to breed at night. So while they'll run around and act interested at first, they may wait till the evening to finally do the deed. The sex lasts only seconds, and it can be really easy to miss. Most goat owners like to know for sure if their goats were bred, but it can be a pain to stay up all night trying to watch for that special moment. Instead, most owners just check the back end of their doe in the morning. You can tell there's been a successful breeding if there's a milky white liquid coming from her vagina. Trust me, it's really easy to spot. [Read my full breeding article here.](#)

HOW TO TELL IF YOUR GOAT IS PREGNANT

It seems like it should be simple, right? A pregnant goat would look... well, pregnant. The problem is, goats have naturally large stomachs, due to the activity in their rumen. So, figuring out if your goat just has a large stomach or is actually pregnant can be harder than you think. Once you notice swelling, the first thing to do is to rule out bloating by [following the instructions here](#).

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF PREGNANCY IN A GOAT:

- **3 weeks post-breeding:** Your goat WILL NOT go into heat again. Symptoms of heat are cervical mucus, wagging their tail, being louder than normal, etc.) Your goat should not be exhibiting any of these signs if she is bred.
- **6 weeks post-breeding:** A goat's belly will be tight, just in front of their udder.
- **12 weeks post breeding:** Their belly will be about 1-2 inches bigger. (You can check this by measuring them right after breeding.)
- **15 weeks post breeding:** Slight swelling of the udder, whether you're already milking them or they're dry.
- **3-4 months post-breeding:** You should be able to feel fetal movement with your hands.
- **4-5 months post-breeding:** The udder should get larger and full of milk, the vulva should be slightly swollen, and they should have a slightly bigger abdomen (meaning one baby inside) or be VERY large (meaning multiple babies inside).

You can also do a [blood test](#) at 30 days post-breeding to see if she's pregnant. (No, human urine pregnancy tests won't work.)

Once you know she's pregnant, [use this calculator](#) to determine the due date!

GOAT BIRTHING

Watch my [video tutorial here](#) on how to assist a goat giving birth!

POST-PARTUM CARE FOR GOATS

After you get over the adorable shock of the adorableness of your adorable new baby goats, then you can begin to think about how to care for mama goat who most likely pushed out some multiple babies. I have [detailed instructions here](#) on how to care for mama & new baby goats!

HOW TO MILK A GOAT

Okay, the time has arrived! Your new baby goats are 2 weeks old and it's time to start milking mama. You will separate the babies from mom at night and then let her udder fill up all night. In the morning she will have a large udder full of milk, and you can milk as much out as you can before letting her back in with her babies for the rest of the day. But what about milk for the babies? This is the awesome thing about goats. They have a reflex that will literally "hold back" milk for their babies. So, in the morning, when you are milking, you can simply milk until she wants you to stop. You will know because you will squeeze and squeeze and barely get anything. Pretty cool, huh? I think so! Once the babies can be weaned (8 weeks old) you will be able to milk your goat morning and night. Here's a [full article here](#) on how to milk a goat!

HOW TO KEEP RAW GOAT'S MILK FRESH & DELICIOUS

Most people turn up their nose at goat's milk because they assume it tastes pungent and has a musky flavor. **I'm here to tell you that isn't true at all!**

Goat's milk is light, sweet, clean, and fresh tasting. There **isn't** a hint of grassy, goaty, musky, or "off" flavor whatsoever. If you've visited my house, I've probably forced you to try my goat's milk, not because I'm weird (well, okay maybe a little), but because I love to see the look on your face and hear you say, "Wow, that tastes just like regular milk!"

[Read my full article here](#) on what makes goats milk taste gross and how to keep it tasting amazing!

HOW MUCH MILK DOES A GOAT PRODUCE?

Goats have the highest amount of milk about 1-2 weeks after giving birth. At this time our Nigerian Dwarfs (miniature goats) are making about a quart or more at MORNING and again at NIGHT. **Total milk per day is 1/2 gallon or 15 gallons a month.**

Very gradually, your goat's milk production will start to go down. At about 5-6 months after freshening, a Nigerian Dwarf will give about 3 cups at MORNING and again at NIGHT. **Total milk per day is 1 1/2 quarts, or 11 gallons a month.**

At about 8-9 months after freshening, she'll be at 2 cups at MORNING and again at NIGHT. **Total milk per day is one quart or 7 gallons a month.**

You can expect about DOUBLE these amounts for regular sized goats.

WHEN TO BREED AGAIN:

Most goats will need to be bred every year to re-freshen their milk and boost the supply again. Most people have their goats give birth in the spring, then continue milking them, breed them in the fall, continue milking them even while pregnant, and stop milking about 2 months before the goat gives birth in the spring again.



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thank you

I hope this guide has helped give you a good overview on what you'll experience as a new goat owner.

May you have many moments of goat fun for years to come.



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