

Health Strategies for Meat Goat Production

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Homework

- Visit meat goat farms
- Get to know several successful meat goat producers
- Attend seminars
- Research crops that grow well in your area
- Research materials from reputable sources
- Determine your goals (how many animals, time commitment, fun or profit?)
- Determine special environmental needs (extreme weather, water, heat, wind)

Visit Farms

- Look at shelters and fences
- Look at farm layout and design (males, juveniles, females, isolation)
- Ask what type of feeds are used
- What vaccines and deworming protocols?
- Look at records
- Handle the animals, learn body condition scoring
- Make a list of questions for each farm

Homework

- Devise your record keeping system (animals, breeding, weights, production, performance, feeds, financials)
- Join your local affiliate goat group
- Visit Langston University website on meat goat production
- Identify your veterinarian and nutritionist

Farm Layout

- Barn: be able to drive up to barn (feed delivery, emergency work, unloading animals)
- How much land?: depends on #'s, type of pasture, weather, geographic location
- Pen set-up: each pen has access to a shelter
- Never too many gates with small catch pens for easy animal flow (more likely to do things)
- Ask producers: What would you change if you could to it over again?

Ask What Type of Feeds

- Pastures: best way to feed animals
- Dry lots: find out source of hay, grain
- Deficiencies: selenium levels (high or low) in feeds depend on geographic location
- Where are forages coming from?
- Analysis of feeds: Dairyland
- Textbooks: check Amazon.com

Service and Support

- Know the seller and the animals you are going to purchase
- What kind of service and support can the seller offer?
- Education: feeding, vaccines, deworming, care, veterinarian, varies depending on farm and location and number of animals

Research Crops and Forages

- There is no “one” right way to feed a meat goat
- Check Langston University meat goat ration software program
- Determine how to take care of your pastures
- County extension agents or university faculty are a good starting point

Determine Goals

- Determine long term goals
- Niche market or Financial Enterprise
- Acreage vs. numbers of animals
- Lifestyle
- Be realistic with time commitment
- Business or hobby

Purchasing Your Animals

- Know the seller
- Ask for records on animals (health, production, identification, financials)
- Buyer beware!
- Purchasing poor animals, infertile animals, diseases, parasites, or culls is very costly
- Place animals in quarantine (3-4 weeks) if other animals present on farm

Individual Goat Identification

- Vitally important for knowing how each goat is performing (now and future)
- Permanent identification required for accurate record keeping
- Records required for management decisions (breeding, disease control, treatment, production, culling)
- Records required for all treatments with meat withdrawal times recorded

Health Management

- Formulate plan for health management with your veterinarian
- Protocols for treatments of common diseases, routine procedures such as newborn kid management, late gestation does, vaccination, deworming, urinary stone prevention in wethers, pneumonia

Nutrition

- Be proactive, know body condition scoring
- Performance related to nutrition, poor nutrition means loss financial opportunities
- Get to know Jeremy Geske
- Manage feeds: storage, source, feed additives, bunk management
- Provide good access to water to maximize water intake
- Prevent urinary stones in wethers

Vaccination Programs

- Clostridium perfringens C/D and Tetanus
- Other vaccines available: Caseous Lymphadenitis, Contagious ecthema, Blackleg, Pneumonia (Mannheimia)
- However, besides C/D and Tetanus, the above vaccines should not be necessary if buying healthy animals and managing animals for health

Reproduction

- Reproduction: pregnant does, fertile bucks, healthy goat kids required !
- Records: breeding, planned breeding, abortion prevention, nutrition, goat kid rearing
- Ultrasound pregnant does: feeding open or infertile does=hidden financial losses

Infectious Disease Programs

- Related to management strategies
- Poor hygiene and management leads to increased goat kid mortality
- Cleanliness: related to risk of infectious diseases (Johne's, Salmonella, parasites)
- Ventilation: related to risk of pneumonia
- Biosecurity: quarantine, know the seller

Parasite Control

- Control coccidiosis: major cause of diarrhea in growing kids, cleanliness, coccidiostats
- Cleanliness: feedbunk management, pastures, decrease fecal contamination in feeds
- Evaluate parasite levels before deworming: fecal floats and fecal egg counts
- Routine deworming without knowledge of parasite load can lead to resistant parasites!

Meat Quality Assurance

- Need to avoid drug residues in meat!
- Many drugs not approved for goats
- Accurate record keeping
- Judicious use of antibiotics
- Work with your veterinarian
- Food Animal Residue Avoidance Database
- If accidental drug used, report it

Disease Surveillance

- Keep up to date records
- Utilize the Minnesota State Diagnostic Lab
- All dead animals: necropsy
- Necropsy: is the most important diagnostic tool, reflects herd health, money well spent
- Provides: mineral levels in liver, fecal analysis, evidence of chronic or ongoing disease
- Serologic testing: CAEV, Johne's

Conclusion

- Goat herds: very diverse, requires health management approaches individualized for each herd
- Health should be based on good nutrition, prevention, and not disease outbreaks
- Time and commitment required: “one shot” to fix all problems does not exist

Questions or Comments?

- Take things slowly
- Learning curve is steep during the first year (s)
- Continue to educate one's self
- Continue to strive for healthy, high performance goals