

# **TEXAS BREEDING GOAT GUIDE<sup>1</sup>**

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# TEXAS BREEDING GOAT GUIDE

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guide is to provide information to leaders, parents, and young people for the development of successful breeding goat projects. The breeding goat project is an on going project that will cover all aspects of goat production during the year. It can be a very educational, rewarding, and profitable experience.

## FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

The facilities and equipment for your breeding goat project are very important. They should be built and ready for use when you select your goats and get them home.

### Pens and Shelter

Your goat pen should be big enough to provide for sufficient exercise, shelter from cold, rainy weather, and enough shade to shelter them during the hot summer months. There is no set guide as to pen space per head, but with breeding goats, the larger the pen the better. For breeding goats a good rule of thumb is approximately 400 square feet of pen space and approximately 25 square feet of shelter space if possible. The simplest and cheapest shelter is a shed that is closed on three sides with the open side facing south. The pen and shelter should be well drained. Fence height should be at least 42 inches to discourage jumping and should be predator proof.

### Feeders

Fiber and meat goats can either be hand-fed or self-fed while dairy goats are usually hand-fed. All feeders (grain, hay, salt, and mineral) should be built off the ground so the goats cannot get their feet in them or lay in them. This can be a real challenge with goats. If hand-feeding, allow 12 to 18 inches of trough space per goat. Hand-fed goats can be fed only once per day but most people prefer to feed twice a day, morning and evening. If self-feeding, allow approximately 6 inches of trough space per goat. Self-feeding allows more flexibility in managing time and labor, while hand-feeding gives you the opportunity to more closely observe your goats on an individual basis. Hand-feeding also gives you the opportunity to control intake so that your goats do not get too fat.

### Water

Clean water is a key factor in any goat project. Water troughs should be small so they can be drained and cleaned each day. An automatic float to control water level and to insure that water is always available is a good idea. Water troughs should be located in the shade to keep water cool during the summer. On cold winter days break the ice and allow the goats to drink.

## SELECTION

When selecting breeding goats you have a choice of fiber goats (Angora, Cashmere), meat goats (Boer, Kiko, Pygmy, Nigerian Dwarf, Tennessee Fainting, Savanna, Spanish), and dairy goats (Alpine, LaMancha, Nubian, Oberhasli, Saanen, and Toggenburg). Many of the major shows have Angora, Boer and dairy goat shows, however, since not all breeds are shown at all shows it is necessary to check the catalogs of all major shows to see which breeds can show. For most major shows in Texas it states that animals must be registered in the Herdbook of their Association in the name of the Junior owner before entering the show ring. Ownership dates will change but for the most part November 1 is the date most junior shows use with the exception of the State Fair of Texas which has an ownership deadline of June 30. Most breeding goats are shown according to the age on their registration papers. For Angora goats there are three age divisions: kid, yearling, and aged. For Boer goats the kid, yearling, and aged divisions are subdivided into more classes. Dairy goats are divided into junior and senior does with various classes within these two divisions.

### **Fiber Goats (Angora, Cashmere)**

In evaluating fiber goats 50% emphasis is placed on body conformation and 50% on fleece. The traits that are considered for body conformation are structural correctness, growth, muscling, volume and capacity, and breed and sex character. The mohair traits that are important in evaluating Angora goats are grade (fineness), uniformity of grade, pounds of mohair, length, density, style and character, luster, completeness of cover, absence of kemp, and absence of sheepy fleece. Grade is the major price determining factor with finer mohair being worth more money than coarser mohair. In general, Angora goats with coarse mohair will shear more pounds while the finer haired goats will shear less pounds, thus one must choose a happy medium between mohair quantity and mohair quality. A Cashmere goat is one which produces a fine downy undercoat that is less than 19 microns in diameter. Fiber color ranges from deep brown to white, with most of the intermediate colors falling into the grey category. The fibers should be crimped as opposed to straight, non-medullated (not hollow), and low in luster.

### **Meat Goats (Boer, Kiko, Pygmy, Nigerian Dwarf, Tennessee Fainting, Savanna, Spanish)**

Breeding meat goats are evaluated on structural correctness, growth, muscling, volume and capacity, and breed and sex character. Several traits that can result in disqualification, especially in the Boer goat, include jaw defects, teat and udder problems, abnormal and excessively split testicles, folded ears, too little pigmentation, blue eyes, and wry tail. It is advisable to consult the breed standards for the various breed associations before purchasing your breeding meat goat.

### **Dairy Goats (Alpine, LaMancha, Nubian, Oberhasli, Saanen, Toggenburg)**

Dairy goats are divided into junior and senior does. Both junior and senior does are evaluated on general appearance, dairy character and body capacity. In addition, senior does are also evaluated on their mammary system. For a more detailed explanation consult the American Dairy Goat Association scorecard.

## NUTRITION

It is important that breeding goats be properly fed and managed to realize the maximum genetic potential for growth and development. Any nutrition program must consider the five basic nutrients: water, protein, energy (carbohydrates and fats), minerals, and vitamins.

### **Water**

Water is the most critical nutrient in a feeding program as it regulates the amount of feed a goat will consume. Clean, fresh water is necessary on a daily basis. Water is an important component of the body as lean tissue consists of over 70% water and all body fluids depend on water. Water provides the fluids necessary to keep the body functioning properly.

### **Protein**

Protein is the primary constituent of the body, therefore, protein from the diet serves to maintain or replace protein in body tissues, provides for carriers of other nutrients, and is a major component of various products such as meat, milk, and fiber. Protein requirements for breeding goats vary according to size, age, sex, and stage and level of production. Young, fast-growing kids need higher protein diets to allow them to grow and develop. Creep rations containing approximately 18% crude protein are useful during the first 2 or 3 months of life. It is important to remember that only natural protein sources should be used for young, growing kids. Rations containing approximately 15% crude protein can be used during the growing phase.

### **Energy**

Energy is necessary for efficient utilization of nutrients. Energy is generally not a problem with high quality breeding goat rations. Grains and protein supplements are high in energy with hay being intermediate.

### **Minerals**

Minerals of major concern in goat rations are salt (sodium and chlorine), calcium and phosphorus. It is recommended that loose salt and a loose ruminant mineral be fed free choice at all times. Calcium and phosphorus, in the appropriate ratio, are necessary for proper growth and development. The ratio in the ration should be approximately 2 parts calcium to one part phosphorus. Calcium carbonate may be added to high energy goat rations to bring the calcium:phosphorus ratio up to 2:1. Rations which contain high levels of phosphorus in relation to calcium may cause urinary calculi, particularly in bucks and wethers. The addition of ammonium chloride at the rate of 10 pounds per ton of ration will help prevent urinary calculi. Roughages are generally high in calcium and low in phosphorus. Grains are generally low in calcium and intermediate in phosphorus. Most protein supplements are high in phosphorus and intermediate in calcium.

### **Vitamins**

Vitamins are required by goats in very small amounts, however, they are essential for proper body function. Of all vitamins, vitamin A is the most likely to be deficient. If goats are

receiving alfalfa hay or dehydrated alfalfa hay pellets in the ration, vitamin A should not be a problem. A disease known as polioencephalomalacia can also occur in goats. This disease is caused by a deficiency in vitamin B1 (thiamine).

### **Management**

The amount and kind of feed fed to goats can make a big difference in the eventual outcome of that animal. If you are raising your own show goats, remember that it is not only important to feed your brood does properly, but also have available a good creep ration for your young kids. As the milk production in a doe begins to decrease, kids will take advantage of a palatable creep ration and make economical, efficient gains.

There are many types of creep rations for kids. When selecting a creep ration, make sure it is palatable, pelleted, high in protein, contains a proper mineral balance, contains ammonium chloride for the prevention of urinary calculi, contains a coccidiostat for the prevention of coccidiosis, and does not contain too much roughage or fiber. Since kids need more protein during the early stages of life, a good creep ration should contain 16 to 18% protein. Remember that young kids have only a small stomach area and their rumen is not fully developed, therefore, a creep ration should be high in protein and energy and low in the bulky roughages that are hard to digest. It is also important to add ground limestone (calcium carbonate) to balance the high phosphorus content of feed grains and a coccidiostat to help prevent coccidiosis. Following is a sample creep ration.

#### Creep Ration - 18% crude protein

600 lb	Crimped, rolled, or chopped corn
600 lb	Crimped or rolled oats
350 lb	Soybean or cottonseed meal
300 lb	Alfalfa pellets or meal
100 lb	Molasses
30 lb	Calcium carbonate (ground limestone)
10 lb	Salt
10 lb	Ammonium chloride
	Coccidiostat (Deccox, Rumensin)

After weaning or as soon as you buy your prospective show goats, they should be put on a growing ration. A growing ration will be different from a creep ration in that it contains a much higher amount of bulky feed or roughage. However, it needs to be palatable, pelleted, have enough protein, contain ammonium chloride, contain a coccidiostat, and contain a proper mineral balance. A growing ration can be a complete feed containing cottonseed hulls and/or alfalfa pellets as a roughage source or can be a high quality hay with a grain supplement which is often the case with dairy goats. A good growing ration should contain 14 to 16% crude protein. Following is a sample growing ration:

### Growing Ration - 15% crude protein

525 lb	Crimped, rolled, or chopped corn and/or milo
525 lb	Crimped or rolled oats
300 lb	Cottonseed hulls
250 lb	Cottonseed meal
250 lb	Alfalfa pellets or meal
100 lb	Molasses
20 lb	Calcium carbonate (ground limestone)
20 lb	Salt
10 lb	Ammonium chloride
	Coccidiostat (Deccox, Rumensin)

Rations can either be self-fed (keeping feed in front of them at all times) or hand-fed (feeding only enough feed that the goats will clean it up in 15 to 30 minutes at a feeding). Self feeding breeding goats is much easier and requires less time, however, does tend to become overly fat. Hand feeding will mean more to the young person by giving him/her a daily responsibility. It is recommended that breeding goats be hand-fed if possible allowing you to more accurately evaluate your goats each day. Breeding goats should consume 3 to 4% of their body weight per day. Angora and meat kids can be self-fed while older Angora and meat goats and all dairy goats should be hand-fed. Breeding goats should receive enough feed each day to be in good condition and allow them to grow but should never be allowed to become excessive in condition. It is important to be patient and slowly develop breeding goats. Buck kids will certainly eat more than doe kids due to their larger size and later maturity pattern. Handle your goats often to make sure they are in proper condition. Kids should be on a growing ration throughout the year or show season.

### **HEALTH**

Healthy goats are important to the success of a breeding goat project. Sick goats and goats which have problems with disease never grow and develop to reach their genetic potential. The key to maintaining a healthy goat is the development of a preventative health program. Agents and exhibitors should utilize a local veterinarian to diagnose and treat diseases and develop a preventative health program. State and federal laws and regulations concerning the use of drugs for livestock are established to protect human and animal health. When administering drugs, always follow label instructions, including withdrawal time before slaughter. The use of a drug in a manner other than stated on its label is regulated by the Food and Drug Administration and may be done only under the control of a licensed veterinarian. Most Texas livestock shows have strict policies against the illegal use of drugs and will disqualify animals if such drugs have been used.

## **Observation**

Careful observation of goats on a daily basis is also a good preventative measure for a successful health program. Goats which are not feeling good will generally not eat as quickly and may not clean up their feed. It is a good idea to routinely check the manure. Goats with diarrhea generally have some type of problem. They have either had their feed changed to quickly, have consumed too much high energy feed, or they may have an internal parasite problem. Check goats to see how they walk and to get a good impression of their overall thriftiness. Goats with their heads hanging down, dull appearing eyes, and walking abnormally generally do not feel well. Watch your goats continually and develop a preventative health program which will allow you the confidence of knowing that you have given your goats adequate protection from those things which most often cause disease problems. Goats which appear sick should receive treatment immediately to prevent more severe disease and health problems from occurring.

Following are the major diseases that affect goats.

## **Abortion Diseases**

The infectious diseases that cause abortions in goats include: Campylobacter, (Vibriosis); Chlamydia; Q Fever; Brucellosis; Leptospirosis; Salmonellosis; Toxoplasmosis; Listeriosis; and Mycoplasmosis. The abortion diseases that are associated with malformed fetuses include: Bluetongue; Akabane Virus Disease; Cache Valley Virus; and Border Disease. It is not uncommon for goats to abort on occasion, however, if the number of abortions increase dramatically one should submit a fresh fetus along with the placenta to a diagnostic laboratory for positive identification of the disease causing the problem. Once the abortion disease has been identified a vaccination program must be employed to prevent the problem in the future. It must be remembered that many of the abortion diseases are zoonotic which means they can be shared between animals and people, therefore, the utmost care should be taken with the abortion diseases.

## **Caprine Arthritis and Encephalitis (CAE)**

Caprine arthritis and encephalitis is an infectious disease that is found primarily in dairy goats. Transmission occurs mostly through the milk and colostrum of infected mothers to nursing kid goats. Contact between infected and non-infected animals can also occur. Intrauterine transmission to the fetus can also occur but is less common. There are two main forms in which CAE can be manifested. The most common form of the disease is arthritis in adult goats. The neurological form occurs in kids 2 to 6 months of age and is characterized by rear leg paralysis. There is no treatment and all infected goats should be culled.

## **Caseous Lymphadenitis (CL)**

Caseous lymphadenitis is a chronic contagious disease that is characterized by the formation of abscesses (lumps) in superficial lymph nodes and/or internal organs. If you do not have this disease try to keep from getting it by isolating new goats for 30 days and treating any abscesses before they rupture. If the disease is already present in your flock, continue to treat abscesses, cull infected goats, and vaccinate with a commercial or an autogenous vaccine.



### **Coccidiosis**

Young goats that have diarrhea usually have coccidiosis. To prevent this disease make sure your feed contains a coccidiostat and make sure troughs are always clean and kids cannot stand in them. Treatment is usually one of the sulfa drugs or corrid. These drugs can be given orally for three to five days or put in the water and force the kids to drink for three to five days.

### **Enterotoxemia (Overeating Disease)**

One of the greatest causes of death in goats is enterotoxemia or overeating disease. The most common symptom or sign of enterotoxemia is sudden death. This disease is caused by a clostridial organism which is normally present in the bowel of most goats. Goats which have their feeding schedule abruptly changed or take on large amounts of grain are the most subject to enterotoxemia. These changes cause the clostridial organism to grow rapidly and produce a powerful toxin which causes death in a few hours. There are two types of enterotoxemia, clostridium perfringens types C and D. Your breeding goats should be vaccinated for enterotoxemia when you get them with a vaccine that is clostridium perfringens type C,D and tetanus toxoid combination. Kids should be vaccinated at 2 to 4 weeks of age. Multiple vaccinations are recommended. A total of two and maybe three vaccinations is preferred, with the booster doses coming three to four weeks following the first vaccination. Using a good vaccination program should result in no losses from enterotoxemia in your breeding goats.

### **Entropion**

Entropion is an inversion of the upper, lower, or both eyelids. The lower lid is most commonly affected. This is usually seen as a watery eye in a kid that is just a few days old. Entropion requires immediate attention to prevent permanent damage to the eyeball. The lid may be sutured, stapled, or inverted with a bolus of penicillin. This condition is very hereditary so do not select a herd sire whose eyes were repaired at birth.

### **External Parasites (Lice)**

There are many external parasites but lice, both biting and sucking, are usually the major culprit. There are many sprays and pour-ons that are effective in controlling lice, however, resistance can occur to any of them. It is best to treat twice, 10 to 14 days apart, to control lice. Lice are a major problem in Angora goats as they cause the mohair to lose its luster and are very irritable to the goat. Meat and dairy goats can also get lice. Treating for lice can save a lot of money on fences. Goats that are itching can certainly wear a fence out by rubbing on it. Contact your local veterinarian as to what products to use to control lice.

### **Floppy Kid Syndrome**

Three to ten day old kids start to show depression, weakness, and paralysis without signs of diarrhea and have normal rectal temperature. These kids have a metabolic acidosis. Treat kids with baking soda at the rate of 3/4 teaspoon for a 10 pound kid. Mix baking soda with water and administer by stomach tube. Rapid recovery can occur as well as rapid relapse.

### **Internal Parasites**

Internal parasites are a continual problem in a breeding goat program. When you first get your breeding goats they should immediately be drenched for internal parasites and a second drenching should follow about three weeks later. There are not many approved drenches for internal parasites in goats. You should consult a veterinarian or Extension agent in your area for recommendations on products that are effective and on the time to administer. Internal parasites tend to build up a resistance to a drench if it is used over a long period of time. Rotating drenches may be effective in helping eliminate internal parasite problems. Fecal exams are a must for determining the success or failure of any deworming program.

### **Pinkeye**

This contagious disease is characterized by excessive watering of the eye and clouding over of the pupil. Goats are susceptible to pinkeye especially after they have been transported to a new location. Dry, dusty pens and constant exposure to sunlight can be contributing factors. Most goats recover without any treatment so be certain the treatment you choose does not cause any harm.

### **Polioencephalomalacia**

This is a nutritional disease that is caused by a thiamine (Vitamin B1) deficiency. Thiamine is produced by the rumen microflora and any alteration of the rumen bugs or ingestion of substances that contain the enzyme thiaminase can quickly produce the disease. Goats appear depressed, star gaze, act blind, and progress to convulsions. The disease is treated with thiamine hydrochloride at a dose of 5 mg/pound of body weight every 6-8 hours until symptoms subside.

### **Pregnancy Toxemia**

Pregnancy toxemia is a very common problem in overfat, confined goats that are carrying twins or triplets. The nutritional demand of the kids is so great during the last 2-4 weeks of pregnancy that the doe is forced to use her own fat reserves for energy. As the fat is utilized for energy, ketones are produced which makes the doe sick. First symptoms are swelling of the legs, loss of muscle over the loin, and loss of appetite. Unless early intervention takes place the doe will die. She needs to be separated from the herd and fed all she wants to eat of primarily a high energy, high protein feed that will take up little space in the rumen. If she does not respond begin treating with liquid energy supplements such as propylene glycol. If the doe has a known breeding date and is within 10-14 days of kidding, labor can be induced.

### **Ringworm**

Ringworm has become a serious problem in the goat industry. Ringworm is contagious and can be transmitted from goat to goat, from goat to human, and from infected equipment to goat. A good prevention program of treating the premises, brushes, clippers, blankets, blocking tables, trailers, etc. is a must. Ringworm can be treated with topicals, injectables, or oral preparations. None will give instant cures.

### **Soremouth (Contagious Ecthyma)**

Soremouth can be a nagging problem for breeding goats. This contagious disease causes the formation of scabs on the lips and around the mouth of goats. This is a virus which can affect humans so gloves should be worn when working with goats with soremouth. Few medicines help in the treatment of soremouth. Iodine can be rubbed into the lesions after the scabs are removed and this will help dry up the area and reduce the infection. The vaccine is a live virus so be certain that you have the disease on your premise prior to vaccination. Almost all lesions will regress in 3 to 4 weeks with or without treatment.

### **Tetanus**

Tetanus is a highly fatal disease that occurs when spores of *Clostridium tetani* enter a wound and set up an infection from which a potent neurotoxin is released. The neurotoxin produces extensor rigidity that begins with signs of stiffness and progresses to recumbency with full tetanic spasms. Tetanus can only be treated in the very early stages of the disease so prevention is very important. It is best to vaccinate for tetanus with a toxoid two weeks prior to any elective surgeries and then give a booster at the time of surgery. If vaccination is not possible, the use of tetanus antitoxin should provide protection for 10 to 20 days. Antitoxin and toxoid can be given at the same time without any interference. Tetanus can result from any of the following wounds: castration (especially with rubber bands), dehorning or disbudding, parturition or obstetrical procedures, tattooing, hoof trimming, puncture wounds, and dog bites.

### **Urinary Calculi**

Urinary calculi is a metabolic disease of male goats characterized by the formation of calculi or stones in the urinary tract. The first sign of urinary calculi is a goat's inability to pass urine. The goat will be restless, kick at its belly, stretch, and attempt to urinate. The common cause of calculi formation in male goats is feed rations with high phosphorus levels and an imbalance of calcium and phosphorus. Because grains are high in phosphorus and low in calcium, high concentrate rations may cause urinary calculi. A successful preventive is to provide a 2:1 calcium:phosphorus ratio in the ration and by adding 10 to 15 pounds of ammonium chloride or ammonium sulfate per ton of feed, Provide plenty of clean, fresh drinking water also.

## **FITTING**

### **Hoof Trimming**

When breeding goats are confined to pens and fed well their hooves grow long and need to be trimmed often. Abnormal hoof growth can lead to problems with feet and leg structure and movement of goats. Hooves need to be trimmed about every month or two. Always trim hooves one to two weeks before a show in case you should cut into the quick and temporarily cripple the goat. This will give the goat time to get well before the show.

### **Fiber Goats**

There is a shearing deadline for Angora goats but not for Cashmere goats. All major shows require that Angora goats must be machine shorn to the skin on or after August 1 of the calendar year preceding the show. Angora and Cashmere goats are shown in their natural state, never washed. Fleece contamination by hay, dirt, shavings, grass burrs, etc. should be kept to a minimum. External parasites, primarily lice, should be controlled as they damage the hair by destroying the luster and making it look dead. As the mohair gets longer Angora goats tend to urinate on themselves which stains the mohair. Does and bucks should be slightly trimmed around the penis and vulva to help prevent this. Proper nutrition is very important for proper fleece growth. The mohair on under fed Angora goats will generally be short and matted and very difficult to evaluate. Properly fed goats will have good staple length with good luster, however, the hair can still be matted. Many producers will work the hair which requires separating the locks and getting all of the tangles out of the hair. If you are not experienced in working mohair you can often do more harm than good. It is recommended that you have an experienced person show you how to properly work the mohair.

### **Meat Goats**

There are no set rules or methods for fitting meat goats. Many times they are shorn slick a month or two before the show or clippers are used to blend in the hair to improve the appearance of the goat. Meat goats are generally washed before the show.

### **Dairy Goats**

Dairy goats are generally clipped approximately 10 days before the show and usually are not washed but are brushed thoroughly to remove dirt and foreign material from the body. A cloth is used to clean the ears, nostrils, udder, and hooves.

## **SHOWING**

Showing is a very important segment of the breeding goat program. It takes a great amount of work, time, and practice at home. Practice is very essential. Practice showing a little every day, especially 30 days prior to your first show. All breeding goats should be worked with until they are gentle and will lead and stand.

The first step in showing is to gentle and be able to control your goat. Often times this is done by halter breaking them. Once the halter is on tie the goat to the fence with his head high and as close as possible. This needs to be done every day for a week to 10 days. Care should be taken not to tie them where they can hurt themselves and you should not go off and leave them tied in case a goat gets tangled or chokes. After they have calmed down the halter should be removed from the Angora goats and they are taught to be handled by hand. By holding and pulling on the hair on the chin and cheeks the goat will learn to respond and lead. Meat and dairy goats are shown with a leather or nylon collar or neck chain.

The next step is to teach your goat to stand, properly place their feet, and get them accustomed to setting up for show. Reach down with one hand and place the back and front feet squarely under the goat. Be sure the goat is standing in a normal position, not too stretched and not too close.

The third and final step is to teach your goat to travel at your side. By pulling on the mohair on the chin of Angora goats or pulling on the collar or chain the goat will step forward. Every time they take a step forward give them some slack. By doing this repeatedly your goat will learn to lead properly.

When showing, never put your hand on the goat's back and touch the goat as little as possible. Keep the goat's head high and the front and back legs straight at all times. When you enter the show ring always be neat and clean. Stay alert, watch the judge at all times, and keep your goat between you and the judge. You will, from time to time, be caught in tight positions. Always remember that good sportsmanship and courtesy are very important when you are at the show and in the show ring.