

Goat Care and Management

Housing and Field Management

Fields should be well fenced around the perimeter and any hedgerows should be checked for poisonous plants or holes that may allow escapees! There should also be 24hr access to a clean water trough and to a dry, wood shavings or straw bedded, draught free shelter of minimum 1.75 sq m floorspace per goat, with enough room to stand up with their head outstretched. As a rough estimate, we recommend a minimum exercise area of around ¼ acre per animal. However, this may vary depending on your ground, your pasture management and breed of goat. Tethering is discouraged. Goats are sociable, herd animals and should be kept in at least pairs.

Goats are naturally inquisitive, so fencing (at least 4ft high) and buildings must be adequately 'goat-proofed', cables and wires must be kept out of reach (they can reach up to 2m) and doors and gates adequately secured, as they can learn to open them. If you need any advice we are happy to help.

You must be registered with the local DEFRA animal health and veterinary laboratories agency (AHVLA) office and be issued with a holding (CPH) number. The goats must be identified by a visible ear tag.

Feeding

Goats are browsers rather than grazers (like sheep), the majority of their diet should be made up of good quality fibre (mainly met by feeding good-quality hay) and a salt lick should be available at all times. Hay should be fed in hayracks, made from wood or metal, and ideally with a lid to avoid them taking food out the top.

There are goat specific feeds available from most suppliers as a mix or pellet and should be fed in accordance with the manufacturer. **Sheep and cattle feeds should be avoided.** Any concentrates should be fed little and often, at least divided between 2 meals per day. Any changes in diet should be made over at least a 2 week period.

Plants that are poisonous to goats include: **alder, rhododendron, yew, laburnum, honeysuckle, walnut, evergreen shrubs, laurel, and delphiniums, tulips and daffodils.**

Body Condition Scoring

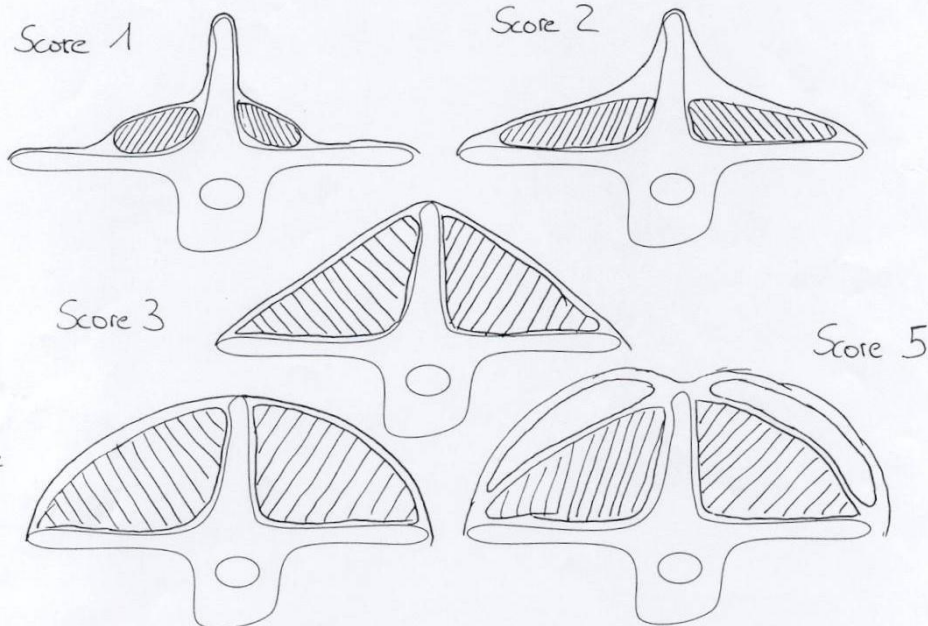
Dedicated to the health of your business...

We use body condition scoring to rate how thin or fat an animal is. We use a scale of 1-5. To body condition score, place your hand around the lumbar transverse processes of the goat spine. These are on the vertebrae after the last rib, in the lower back region. How defined or 'pointy' they are relates to how much fat is present. You can also palpate the sternum.

This is a good way of monitoring how much extra feed your goat may need or whether they need a bit of a diet! We recommend pet goats having a BCS of 2.5 – 3.5. If you are planning on breeding your goat please speak to a vet so we can advise on the best BCS for each stage of pregnancy.

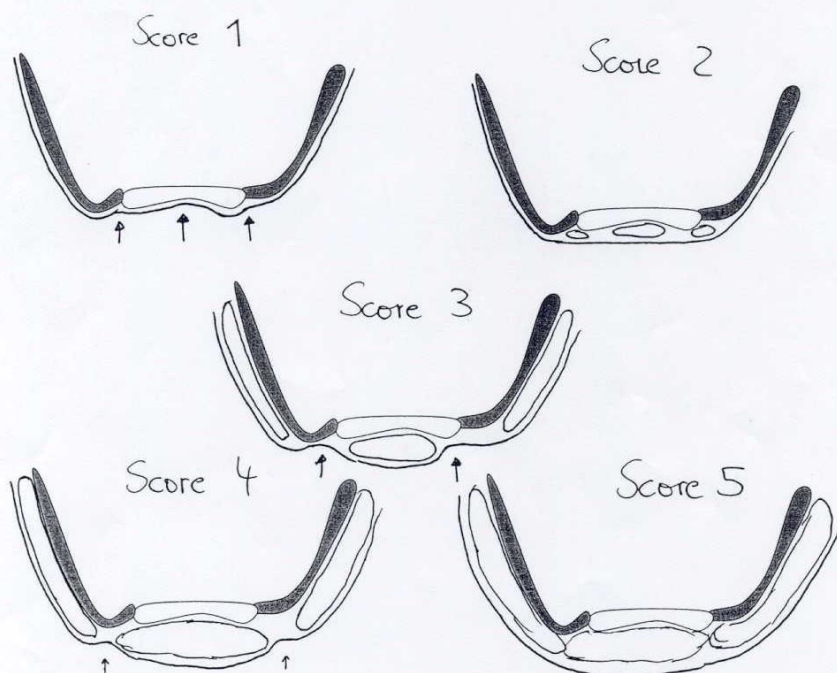
Lumbar

- **1 very lean** intervert. articulations palpable, muscle 2/3 distance along proc. transv.
- **2 lean** dors. and trans. proc. prominent, skin forms a concave line
- **3 good** proc. still easily felt, angle filled with muscles, skin forms straight line
- **4 fat** proc. difficult to feel, skin convex line
- **5 obese** prominent groove down the back line, muscles mount up on each side



Sternal Score

- 1 very lean
chondro-sternal articulations easily felt, depression over sternum not filled, skin movable
- 2 lean
chondro-sternal articulations difficult to feel, internal fat on each side of sternum and subcutaneous fat fills central depression
- 3 good
distinct depression palp. on each side between muscle and fat and bone
- 4 fat
sternum and ribs no longer palp. Slight depression on each side
- 5 obese
subcut fat no longer mobile, no depressions palpable



From Harwood "Goat Health and Welfare" Crowood Press.

Handling

Goats should be handled in a quiet and confident manner and should be handled regularly from an early age. They can be restrained with an arm under the neck and a hand on the hind end.

Most routine tasks should be carried out with the goat upright, unlike sheep which are commonly 'tipped'.

Heavily pregnant animals should only be handled if absolutely necessary and care taken to avoid unnecessary stress.

Vaccination

We recommend vaccinating your goats against a group of bacterial diseases called Clostridial disease with a vaccine called **Lambivac**, although it does not have a marketing authorisation for goats. Tetanus and botulism are part of this group. The initial course is 2 injections 4-6 weeks apart, then 6 monthly boosters, one of which will be 4-6 weeks before kidding if you are breeding your goats.

Foot trimming

You should not need to routinely trim your goat's feet. Trimming can cause lameness problems so we will only advise trimming if necessary.

Worming

Goats are susceptible to many parasites and do not build up age-related immunity like cows and sheep do. Therefore, it is important to manage pastures well and perform regular faecal egg counts and important they are only wormed when necessary. Clinical signs of parasitic infections include weight loss and diarrhoea. We can detect these parasites by testing a poo sample either here at the practice or sending the sample away to a lab. We recommend bringing in a poo sample at least every 3 months or when clinical signs present. You can drop the sample into the practice and we will get it tested as soon as possible. Please make sure the sample is as fresh as possible and labelled. **Any samples dropped off after 12pm may not get tested on the same day.**

Goats should be moved to a clean pasture after worming to prevent them re-infecting themselves. Therefore, a rotational grazing system is useful as you will have fields that will have been rested so there will be a lower worm burden on these pastures.

Resistance to wormers is now fairly common so we only aim to worm when needed and use the appropriate chemical for the job. We also recommend leaving the flock on the dirty pasture for 24-48hrs after treatment. This will mean that any parasites transferred to the new field will not just be the ones resistant to the treatment.

There are no licenced products for worming goats, however chemicals used for sheep can be used. They can come in the form of an oral drench, injection or pour on. Goats should be

dosed based on an accurate weight. We will advise you which product is best to use after testing your faecal sample.

You can administer wormers yourself but if you need any help please just ask the vet, we are happy to teach you!

Kidding

If you are looking at breeding your goats, please speak to a vet and we can advise on how best to go about this! Kidding is great fun and very rewarding, but it is easy to have problems if things aren't done quite right.

Common conditions in goats

Urolithiasis

- Difficulty to urinate, straining, may have colic and be lethargic: **call a vet!**
- Particularly common in young, overweight, male castrated pygmy goats fed on a high concentrate diet

Lameness

- Examine the foot as there are many causes of lameness
- Spray the foot with **blue engemycin spray**
- **Speak to a vet for appropriate drugs**

Dog Attacks/Wounds

- **Call a vet!**
- Shock is the main problem here – try and keep the goat as stress free as possible in a calm environment
- Heavy bleeding – put pressure on any areas that are bleeding heavily until the vet arrives

Arthritis

- Older goats may suffer from arthritis which can be managed with pain killers
- There are numerous different drugs, speak to a vet to decide the best option for you.

Other

It's a good idea to keep a diary/calendar or a book to help plan and record management and treatment of your goats. For any medication, you should record:

- **Name of the animal treated**
- **Name of the product/drug**
- **Dosage**

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- **Batch number and expiry date**

You can also use this book to keep a record of vaccinations and body condition scores.

If you are at all concerned about your animals please call us, we have a **vet available on the phone 24/7** to help you in an emergency or offer advice.

We are happy to teach you any skills you may need such as injecting and drenching, please just ask!

If you are planning on breeding **please let the practice know**. It is a very exciting time but also requires planning, preparation and equipment so it is best to chat with a vet and we can write a breeding programme for you.

We can be contacted on:

Thame – 01844 260616

thame@norcalvets.co.uk