

Hand-raising a baby goat kid requires a commitment to providing adequate nutrition, housing, and care to give the kid the best chance to grow into a healthy, productive adult. This information is designed to help provide a better understanding of generally accepted kid management guidelines and how each recommendation benefits the kid. It is not intended to provide treatment recommendations - there is no substitute for sound advice from your veterinarian.

DIP THE NAVEL CORD IMMEDIATELY AFTER BIRTH TO HELP PREVENT NAVEL INFECTION

Immediately after birth, the navel cord should be dipped in iodine solution to help prevent bacterial infection. A long navel cord should be trimmed to 3 or 4 inches in length before dipping. A bleeding cord should be dipped, then tied with surgical suture material. Dipping the navel cord also promotes rapid drying and the eventual breaking away of the cord from the navel.

FEED COLOSTRUM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER BIRTH

Colostrum, or first milk, contains antibodies which are not passed to the fetal kid in utero. Colostrum must be fed promptly (within 2 hours if possible, and no later than 12 hours after birth) because the newborn rapidly loses the ability to absorb these critical proteins directly into the bloodstream. Colostrum should be bottle-fed to the newborn, or fed by stomach tube, if necessary, to insure adequate consumption. The doe's colostrum is always the best choice if it is clean and disease free. Collect colostrum into a clean container and feed immediately. Refrigerate or freeze unused colostrum promptly to slow bacterial growth. Feed colostrum for the first 24 to 48 hours of life, and then transition gradually to milk replacer if needed.



FREEZE EXCESS COLOSTRUM, RE-WARM GENTLY TO PRESERVE THE VALUABLE ANTIBODIES

Clean ice cube trays can be used to freeze the colostrum quickly in single feeding increments. Store the colostrum "cubes" in a clearly labeled, tightly closed freezer bag for no more than 6 months. Thaw colostrum at room temperature or in the refrigerator, and re-warm gently in the feeding bottle over a warm water bath. Do not heat in a microwave - it can damage the antibody proteins. Extra colostrum can be used for other newborn goat kids, or added to milk replacer as an excellent nutritional boost for a nursing kid that is sick.

USE A COLOSTRUM SUPPLEMENT IF NO MATERNAL COLOSTRUM IS AVAILABLE

Colostrum from does positive for diseases such as CAE (caprine arthritis encephalitis) or Johne's disease, or any colostrum that is contaminated with blood, manure or chunky material should be discarded and not fed. Substitute another doe's colostrum or fresh cow colostrum, or use a colostrum supplement according to label directions for goat kids if no fresh or frozen colostrum is available. Calf colostrum supplements and replacers are also good choices, as most supplement products labeled for goat kids contain Bovine (cow) antibodies anyways.

BOTTLE FEEDING THE NURSING GOAT KID – FREQUENT SMALL MEALS ARE BEST

Milk is the primary source of nutrition for the pre-weaned goat kid. Hand raised goat kids can be fed milk in bottles or pails, or in automated feeder units. The method you choose will depend on the size of your herd and your available labor, as well as personal preference. Under natural conditions, goat kids nurse very small amounts of milk at frequent intervals. Hand feeding should mimic the natural feeding schedule as closely as possible. To minimize the chance of digestive problems, kids should be fed at least 4 times daily for the first two to three weeks of life, then 3 times daily until they reach 30 days of age. When using a free choice feeding system, it is important to feed the milk replacer cold to help prevent over-consumption. If your kid develops scours (diarrhea), provide supplemental electrolytes mixed with water and fed separately from milk. The extra fluids are important to help prevent dehydration and restore fluid and electrolyte balance. Electrolytes do not contain nearly enough nutrients to sustain normal body maintenance, much less allow for a strong immune response, so it is not recommended that you replace more than 50% of the normal daily milk replacer volume with electrolytes, even for a scouring kid.

MAKE SURE THE KID'S ENVIRONMENT IS SUITABLE FOR A NEWBORN

Provide a clean, well-bedded shelter that is draft free. If the kid will be hand raised, it is better to house it individually or in a small group of kids that are close in age, and minimize exposure to other animals, particularly adult goats and other species. Adult animals often carry and shed in their manure bacteria and viruses that can be harmful to newborns.



KID CARE: Volume 2.01 Tips for Hand Raising a Healthy Goat Kid



OFFER FREE CHOICE DRY FEED AND WATER TO JUMP START RUMEN DEVELOPMENT

Goat kids should be offered a high-quality starter grain ration with at least 16-18% crude protein starting at about 1 week of age. High quality forage (fine stemmed hay or pasture) should be made available at about 3 weeks of age. For all animals it is very important to provide clean, fresh water free choice at all times.

WEAN FROM MILK REPLACER WHEN THE KID IS EATING ENOUGH SOLID FEED

A healthy goat kid that is consuming hay, grain and fresh water daily, and is growing well, can be weaned from milk replacer at about 30 days of age. A weaning weight goal for standard goat kids is about 25 to 30 pounds, or double the birth weight. The most important consideration is dry feed intake - the kid must receive enough nutrition to continue to grow well without the milk.

CONSULT WITH YOUR VETERINARIAN FOR PROTOCOLS ON DEHORNING, VACCINATING AND CASTRATING

Kids should be dehorned between 3 and 14 days of age, while the horn bud is visible. On your veterinarian's recommendation, vaccinate goat kids at about 3 to 4 weeks of age for diseases that are a problem in your herd. Boosters for some vaccines are needed in two to four weeks. Castrating should be done at 2 to 4 weeks of age for buck kids that will be kept in the herd beyond 4 weeks of age.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Your livestock veterinarian and local university extension agent are often excellent resources for goat information, as well as many online sources. Please visit the Learning and Resource Center at www.savacaf.com for some helpful online links.