

Goat Starter Setup List

What you need to have for your goats and some hints in our experience:
- To keep things efficient and your goats happy & healthy-

1) Good Fencing, Pasture Free ranging for goats is ideal and your goats should like to stay around you and your place, since they appreciate a safe home base and you as their shepherd. But even if you can offer them this natural way of life, variety of plants and exercise, you need at least a night pen and safe enclosure for them for the time you won't be around; to keep the goats in and predators out. Cattle panels or even better, horse panels (smaller meshes where goats don't get stuck with their heads and goats kids can not slip thru) are great, but not affordable for everybody. You can also go with mesh wire. The "horse wire size" is to prefer on that fencing as well. Check for goats that may get stuck in fences. If you can not free range your goats, because of neighbours, highways or too many predators in the area, fence an area as big as possible as goat pasture. Also offer something in the pasture for them to jump and climb. To protect against PREDATORS use night lights, Radios (choose a talking channel) and "Nite Guards" (solar blinkers) > see extra hand out

2) Low Water Trough Choose a size that can hold enough water for the goats to ensure they will always have water, even if you leave for a day and can not fill it up soon. But also make sure it is not too high, so smaller goats can reach it as well. Place the trough in a shady place to keep the water fresh in hot weather. To prevent squirrels or even chicks from ending up in the trough, simply place an old oven rack or something similar leaned towards the side in the trough, that way little creatures that might fall in can climb back out.

3) Mineral Salt Block Goats need a lot of minerals. For several areas with selenium deficiency, like ours, you need to offer them also plenty of extra selenium. The right kind of salt lick for those areas is the Traced Mineral Selenium 90 block. They are usually only available in big sizes, but that is fine even for a few goats, it will last quite a while. The smaller blocks available usually don't carry the extra selenium. Keep the block from the ground and in a dust free area. Outside the barn, near the water trough in a raised pen or basket with holes in the bottom works great.

4) Hay Feeder Choose or build one that has a pen under the rack, to keep the hay that falls thru the rack off the ground. That way you keep the hay clean, your goats eat it all up, you won't waste as much hay and the feeding area is from becoming a mess. If goats have the choice, they do not eat hay that has fallen on the ground, was stepped on or got messed up in other ways...

5) Shelter Dry and wind proof shelter is necessary for cold, wet and hot weather. For the bedding we prefer sawdust/shavings to absorb moisture. To make it extra cosy, you can put straw on top of it. Clean the barn out frequently.

6) Water Heater for the Winter Goats need to have always fresh and unfrozen water. For winter time, we prefer heaters that jump only on below freezing/ De-icer. Those save you energy and avoid over heating of the water. In really cold weather goats like warm water though, you can offer warm water any time you like. For water heaters that heat all the time you can add a thermo plug in, which will turn the heater off, when it gets above freezing. Heated buckets are usually more spendy and don't seem to have the lifetime of separated heaters. If you have a plastic trough, make sure the heater is safe for those.

7) Hoof Trimmers Depending on how much your goats can room and wear there hoofs down by walking and climbing, you will need to trim the hoofs between 2 to 6 times a year. Get a clipper in a size that fits in your hands well.

8) Hay, Grain and Branches Grass hay should be available as much as the goats like to eat (except if they look overweight, which could especially happen in miniature breeds and goats that don't have enough exercise). Around 5lbs per goat/day is recommended. Grain and goat feed can be fed by choice ones a day, but only after they have had there hay first to get there ruminants going before. If you only feed grass hay, you should feed your goats grain especially in winter; 1/2 to 1 lb per goat/day should be fine. To avoid bloating, you can add baking soda. If you feed alfalfa hay, this has already plenty of protein and grain is not necessary needed (but a nice treat). Be careful with hay sold as feeder hay. Goats will like the weeds, which are usually in it, but while you carry it around to feed it, you will spread weed seeds around and those will sprout. Also never feed hay with mould! Do NOT use products labelled "for sheep & goats" because they are woefully insufficient in the amount of copper needed by goats.

A feeding example, based on how we feed: During summer we free range the goats and rotate pastures a lot. During winter we feed grass hay in the morning and alfalfa in the evening. Our does get grain during kidding season. During the day we feed tree branches to all the goats, pine and other needle trees. They love to eat the needles and bark (which are loaded with minerals and vitamins), it keeps the goats from getting borrowed in the winter pens and allows them to follow there natural eating habits, which is browsing thru a huge variety of different plants and shrubs. Try it, your goats will love it. Another hint: Ones the branches are eaten up so far and pealed, shredder them and you have the chips in addition to there sawdust/ shaving for bedding. We also feed kitchen scratch like peels from washed apples, potatoes and oranges and all kinds of vegetables (except for rhubarb and nuts). Never feed anything mouldy. Goats eat pretty much everything but it needs to be in very good quality/ fresh. For poison plants, please do your own research, as we never had a case of poisoning in our goats. They are usually smart in avoiding those plants.

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