

Feeding Goats

The goat industry has expanded substantially in the past decade. This growth is expected to continue. In general, there are three distinct segments of this industry. They include:

Dairy goats – These goats are raised to provide goat milk for the dairy industry. The popularity of specialty goat cheeses has particularly increased the demand for goat milk. To be involved in this market a producer needs to be within the service area of a processor. Therefore, this business tends to be in clusters around a processing plant. There are a variety of different dairy goat breeds, just like cattle breeds.

Meat goats – The growth of the meat goat industry in the U.S. can be attributed to the ethnic demand for the product. The largest goat-consuming population is the Muslim community. The growing Hispanic population also supports the increased consumption of goat meat. Goats are often sold at the farm-gate at about 30 pounds for holiday rituals, or marketed to a slaughter facility at about 70 pounds. For meat production, the Boer goat is considered one of the most desirable (and popular) goat breeds. The number of goats raised in the U.S. for meat increased 57% between 1997 and 2002.

Pet goats – Goats are also popular as pets on hobby farms or used for youth projects. In addition to the standard goat breeds there are specialty breeds such as Angora goats, Pygmy goats and yes, even fainting goats. Unlike the other two markets, these goats are generally on a maintenance diet and supplementation beyond forages is minimal. Meeting the feed needs of this market segment is typically centered around simplicity and convenience. Owners of hobby farms may have several different animal species on the premises and are looking to minimize the number of feeds they must buy.



Nutrition Basics

- If specific goat feeds are not available or are not a practical option, use the corresponding dairy feed. A texturized calf feed is a popular general purpose goat feed. Often, the temptation is to substitute a sheep feed, but other than Angora and Pygmy goats, copper should be included in the diet.
- Meat type goats on a high-grain diet are prone to urinary calculi, so the addition of ammonium chloride is common in these diets. Also attempt to achieve a 2:1 calcium to phosphorus ratio in the complete diet.
- Coccidiosis can be a problem, especially in kids. Consider using a coccidiostat.
- Hay or other roughage is the basis of most goat diets, other than a finishing diet for meat type goats. Forages fed to goats must be of good quality, free of any mold.



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Vita Plus Goat Feeds

- Goat Mineral (#2280) - A free-choice mineral for goats on pasture or in a drylot. This mineral is formulated with the Vita Plus Rainguard weather protection.
- 18% Dairy Goat Pellet (#800220) – This is a complete grain mix in pelleted form for dairy goats. The easy to feed pellet form reduces ingredient segregation and feed waste. This may be used as a creep feed for kids, along with hay for growing goats, or fed according to production in lactating goats.
- 36% Dairy Goat Concentrate (#800222) – This pellet may be used in the manufacture of grain mixes for dairy goats, along with local sources of corn, oats, and molasses. This product is non-medicated.

Suggested Grain Feeding Rates for Dairy Goats

Stage	Amount per head per day
Pre-weaning starter feed (2-4 mo.)	Free-choice
Growing goats (4 mo. to 6-8 weeks prior to kidding)	1 – 1 ½ lb
Dry does (6-8 weeks prior to kidding)	1 – 2 lb
Lactating does	1 lb for each 3 lb of milk produced
Billies	1 – 2 lb
Provide free-choice access to forage, a mineral supplement, and clean, fresh water.	

- 16% Meat Goat Pellet (#800224) – This is a complete grain mix for growing and finishing meat goats. This includes ammonium chloride for the prevention of urinary calculi and Deccox® for control of coccidiosis.
- 34% Meat Goat Concentrate (#800226) – This pellet may be used in the manufacture of grain mixes for meat goats, along with local sources of corn, oats, and molasses. This product is non-medicated. If desired, the medication of choice can be added when preparing the grain mix.



Suggested Feeding Program for Meat Goats

Stage	Feeding Program
Pre-weaning starter feed (<3 mo.)	Free-choice a creep feed starting at 1 wk. of age.
Weaned goats (3 mo. to market)	Start feeding a grain mix at 1% of body weight at weaning. Increase to about 3% of body weight over a 2-3 week period. Hay should be available free choice to start and then reduced as goats come on feed. Thereafter, limited hay should be fed at the rate of ¼ - ½ lb per head daily.
Gestating Does	Free choice forage; Supplement with 1 ½ lb of grain during the last 4-6 weeks of gestation.
Lactating does	Free choice forage; Supplement with 2 lb of grain.
Billies	Free choice forage; grain as needed to maintain body condition.
Provide free-choice access to a mineral supplement and clean, fresh, water.	



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