

Basic Goat Care

We are very excited that you have chosen to host some of our very special goats! Goats are amazing companion animals and caring for them is a very rewarding experience. There are always new things to learn in regards to animal husbandry, but here are some basic guidelines for goat care. If you are feeling unsure about anything or if a unique situation arises please email nvfanimalrentals@gmail.com. In case of emergency, please call Michaela at 802-338-0116.

What is included in your goat kit:

Fencing Panels and posts

Shelter

Hay net

Water bucket

Rope halter

Hay

Mineral Block

Your goats will require daily care. We're sure your first week will probably include a lot of clambering about who GETS to do these chores. However, as the days pass this may shift. Filling up buckets and hauling hay is not as fun during a thunderstorm and fixing fences is not as exciting when something goes after dark. However, these things must be done regardless of timing or weather. **We highly recommend having a family meeting and putting systems in place before the goats arrive.** Who will be responsible for what on what days of the week? Will parents pick up the slack if the kids lose interest or will the goats be returned? Whatever you decide, please stick to your commitments. Our goal is support you and your family in developing animal care skills and mindsets that will last a lifetime. If you need support in any of this, we are here to help!

Basic Nutritional Needs

Water: Clean, fresh water must always be available to your goats. Use heavy containers to prevent spilling. Checking and refilling water is something you should do at least twice a day. Once a week, you should scrub out your water container to remove any buildup.

Minerals: Essential to daily nutrition, minerals should always be available to your goat. Goat minerals come in multiple forms, including loose minerals and mineral blocks. We will provide a mineral block for you. Make sure the block is under cover in order to keep in from getting wet and dissolving.

Feed: As ruminants (animals with stomachs that have four chambers), goats rely mainly on hay or pasture to fulfill their dietary needs. They need at least eight hours of grazing time per day. We will be providing hay and a hay net to keep the hay clean as well as to minimize waste. We will inform you of the correct amount to feed depending on the goats you are hosting.

Goats love snacks! There are many fruits and veggies that they can eat. They also love to eat weeds and can be fed grass clippings and weeds from your garden/lawn. Feed all treats in

moderation. [Toxic Plants for Goats. Goats have great instincts but it's helpful to know \(packgoats.com\)](#) can help you figure out what you should or should not feed to your goats.

Shelter Requirements

Building: For goat housing, the most important thing is protection from the sun and the weather. Your shelter should provide shade and a place for them to get out of the rain and wind. Make sure you are cleaning out the shelter regularly to prevent manure buildup and to insure that your goats have a dry and clean place to sleep.

Fencing: In addition to adequate shelter, goats need a fenced-in outdoor area. The ideal fencing to use for goats is woven wire, “no climb” fencing, which we will provide. Regularly walk along your fence line to check for holes dug under the fencing by predators and that there are no gaps for the goats to escape. Our fence setup is approximately 16x16. **Please be aware that grass where you place the enclosure will be destroyed for at least the year.** It is best to choose an area that you may use for gardening in the future or an area far enough from the house that the grass is not of concern to you.

Tethering: Tethering your goats (putting them on a long leash) can be very dangerous because a goat can accidentally hang himself on a tether. You are welcome to tether your goat if you are out with your goat. This means that you are near your goat and able to see them constantly.

Handling Goats

When working with goats, be very calm and gentle in your approach. Goats are nervous by nature and will spook easily if you yell or handle them roughly. When handling your goats, use a rope halter. If you use their collar, pull it so that the pressure is on the back of their neck and not across their throat. Handling your goat too roughly will cause him to struggle more, so the best amount of restraint is just enough to keep him still. Most goats like to be brushed and this can be useful for building relationships as well as keeping their coat clean and healthy.

Grounding yourself: This is one of the most important skills with any type of animal ownership. Animals are non-verbal, and look to our physical cues for information about us. Creating a space of calm inside yourself can have seemingly magical effects on the animal you are interacting with. Try to create a grounding ritual with your kids before they enter an animal pen. Something like this might be good to start with-

Begin by taking a full breath in and a long breath out (5 seconds).

Now bringing awareness to the top of your body, your head, face, neck, shoulders (3 seconds).

Noticing any sensations, movements, any places of holding (5 seconds).

Now moving down to the arms and the hands (5 seconds)

Sensing the back of the body, the front of the body (3 seconds).

Feeling the contact of your body with ground(10 seconds).

Now sensing your upper legs, your lower legs, and the feet (5 seconds).

Noticing if there are any particular places that call out for attention.
Places where sensations feel most vibrant or dynamic (10 seconds)
Take a full breath in and a long breath out (5 seconds)

We cannot stress the benefits of this enough. Creating these types of habits with interacting with animals can have life-long benefits for children and for the animals around them.

Goat Health

You should be assessing your goat's health daily. If you notice anything unusual please contact us. We can either confirm that something is benign or make a plan with you for supporting your goats health. If you end up keeping your goats for longer than a month, we will schedule a visit to trim hooves, possibly deworm, and do a health assessment. Here are some things to be watching for:

Behavior: Behavioral changes often signify changes in physical or mental health. Noticing behavioral changes requires observing a baseline and recognizing when that changes. Is your curious goat suddenly extremely shy? Is your quiet goat very noisy? These good things to note as you do your chores.

Eating/drinking: A goat that is not eating or drinking is extremely problematic. Please report if either of these things are happening.

The following are questions you can ask as you check on your goats:

- Does the animal seem relaxed?
- Is the goat in question in good condition; neither too thin, nor too fat?
- If you pinch the skin, does it return to the normal position quickly?
- Is its coat bright and shiny?
- Is the coat free from loose hair?
- Is this animal free of ticks, lice and mites under the tail, around the udder, in the ear and between the hooves?
 - Is the animal free of coughing or sneezing?
- Is the goat free of wounds or lumps?
- Is the urine clear, yellow and free from blood or pus?
- Is the tail or rear area of the animal clean of stains caused by diarrhea?
- Does the goat pass feces freely, without straining due to constipation?
- Are the feces of the goat well formed?
- Are the feces free of any sign of diarrhea (watery feces) or blood?
 - Are their eyes bright and engaged?

Safety

Please always be acting in a safety conscious way when dealing with your goats. Although our goats are friendly they can do serious harm to an adult, child, or landscape. Here are some situations to consider and be mindful of when handling goats.

A leash wrapped around your hand can cause serious damage. Hold the leash, but do not wrap. A goat could get spooked and drag you, cutting off the circulation to your hand or dragging you through something dangerous.

An escaped goat could completely destroy your garden or your neighbor's lawn/garden.

If you live near a road, an escaped goat could cause a child to chase it into the road. An escaped goat near a road could also cause a car accident.

There are many other examples of unsafe situations that could arise with you goat. The point is to always be thinking about possible outcomes of a situation and to plan accordingly. During our site checks and setups, we will try to bring awareness to possible situations in your area and ways to conduct yourself safely.

Conclusion

During our site check and setup, we will be able to give you more information that is specific to your location and situation as well as answer more questions you may have. When in doubt, always reach out. You may extend your goat's stay for another month when you reach the end of your first month. We hope you enjoy getting to know our goats and that this experience is rewarding, fun, and valuable to you and your family.