

NEW YORK STATE 4-H DAIRY GOAT PROJECT FACT SHEET #5

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April 1999
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FACILITIES FOR YOUR DAIRY DOE

Housing - Before you buy your goat you need a shelter and pen for it. Take time to visit other goat farms in your area to see what sort of goat housing works best for them. Whatever shelter you decide on should have a dry, well-drained floor and protect the goat from rain and severe winds. It should have easy access to running water (year round), be easy to put bedding in and easy to rake up and remove soiled bedding from. Locate your goat house far enough from your house that normal goat noises and flies will not bother your family but close enough that you can 1) easily haul water to it if your house is your winter water source, and 2) hopefully, hear if your goat is threatened by dogs.

One of the simplest, cheapest shelters to build is a 3- sided shed. The open side of the shed should face south unless this is the direction your worst storms come from. The roof of the shed should slope away from the open side so rain and snow will slide off to the back rather than making the shed wet at the opening. Locate the shed where there is good drainage. Putting a few inches of gravel on the floor or laying down some old wooden pallets will also help keep the ground dry inside. The dimensions of the shed should provide a minimum of 12 to 15 sq. ft. of floor space per doe assuming she also has a yard to exercise in. For example a shed that is 6 ft long and 4 ft. wide can house two does. The shed should be a minimum of 3 ft high at the back and anywhere from 44 inches to 6 ft tall at the front. A taller shed will tend to be draftier, which is an advantage in the summer but a disadvantage in the winter. If you make the shed tall enough for you to stand up (for example 4 ft. at the back and 6 ft at the front), you will be able to tie your goat in it when you are brushing her and trimming her hooves, etc. In the winter, it is a good idea to board up half the front of the shed to form a 3 1/2 sided shed to give the goat more weather protection while still providing plenty of healthy ventilation. If your goat is going to kid in the cold months of December through March, board up the open side as kidding approaches so that only a small opening remains. This way, you can attach a small, hinged door that you can close shut at kidding if the temperature including wind chill is very severe.

Larger sheds, barns and garages can also be used for goat housing. The advantages of these larger buildings is that you can often arrange them so that you have one stall to keep your goats in and one stall to milk in. It is really nice to be able to milk out of the rain and snow! If you store your hay and grain in the same building, you must make **absolutely sure** your goat cannot break into your grain storage area. Goats do not use common sense when it comes to grain and are easily killed by overeating it. If your goat stays in the shed all winter you need at least 25 sq. ft. of floor space and 1 to 2 sq.ft of window light per goat. Make sure any glass windows are not situated where bored goats can reach and break them. Cement floors are not necessary for goats (though they do make the milking area easier to clean) and should be covered with 6 inches of bedding to help soak up urine and manure.

Pens - As well as a shed, your goat will enjoy a pen to exercise in. Goat pens should be easy to keep goats in and dogs out and provide at least 25 sq.ft. of floor space per goat. If possible, they should be even larger so that your goats can race around and kick up their heels and really exercise if they want to. One of the simplest, but not necessarily cheapest, pens to build is to make a 16 ft square pen using 4 - 6 ft. high steel fence posts (driven 1 1/2 ft. deep) and 4 - 16 ft. long metal livestock panels. The panels can be wired to the posts except at one corner where two sided snaps can be used instead to provide a gate. If you put your posts at the middle of the panel span rather than at the corners, your panels will sag less.

Another good fencing for pens is woven net wire fencing at least 42, and preferably, 48 inches high. An ideal woven fence has a small mesh size at the bottom (to keep kids in) and gets larger at the middle and top.

Horned goats need mesh with 12 inch wide vertical spacing to avoid getting their horns caught in it, otherwise, 8 inch spacing is sufficient. Goats can get their heads hung up in 6 inch spacing. Welded wire fencing tends to break at the welds after a year of goats repeatably standing on it, but can be used if a strand of electric wire is run about 4 inches in from it at the top (use "offset" plastic insulators) to discourage goats from leaning on it. Electric wire fences alone are tricky since at least a few times a year you can count on them malfunctioning and losing their charge. Some goats are very quick to notice when an electric fence stops working and upon escaping may head straight for a busy road or your family's favorite fruit trees or some very poisonous landscaping plants like yew or rhododendron.

Please note - if you plan on pasturing your goat, read over NY 4-H Meat Goat Fact Sheet #5 as well. Remember, goats that are staked out to graze can easily strangle!

Waterers- 5-gallon plastic buckets work fine. Try to hang the waterer high enough (just a little above her tail) so that your goat cannot poop in it. It will save you labor in the summer if you can reach the waterer from the outside of the pen with a hose to fill it. Even so, it will still need to be cleaned out often. In the wintertime, plan on refilling your doe's water twice daily, as it may freeze soon after you bring it to her. Does that are milking will drink and milk more if you give them warm water in winter.

Feed mangers - There are many different designs available for feed mangers. You want a manger that your goat 1) can get her head into easily, 2) not drag hay back out of easily, and 3) not poop or jump in. You will need about 12 to 18 inches of headroom per goat. Mangers should be located where they stay dry. Usually, you need a feed trough that is at least 10 inches wide and 24 inches tall. The walls of it should be solid for the bottom 10 inches. The remainder of the wall should either have "keyhole openings" cut into it for the goat to put her head in or be made of 1 " x 2 " parallel, vertical slats with 7 inches of head space between them (9 inches for mature bucks) and **angled slightly (@ 30 degree slant)**. Some folks like to put their mangers up high and have the goat stand on a toe board with her front feet to eat. However, heavily pregnant does can slip off the toe bar and choke to death before anyone can reach them. Always make sure keyhole openings and slats extend low enough that the goat will not choke if it stumbles to its knees. Your goat's salt can be put in one corner of the manger or in special holders available at most feed stores.

Suggested Activities

- 1) If you are planning to get a goat, plan out a pen and shed for it, price the materials at two or more stores, go and buy them and make your goat's housing (or help a friend who is just getting their first goat).
- 2) If you already have a goat and housing, study your hay feeder to decide if it has any problems. Visit other goat farms or look at hay feeder plans in books and then build plans for a new feeder based on your observations. Make a list of needed supplies and price them at various stores.
- 3) Get together with your 4 - H club and build the feeder you have planned out and priced.
- 4) Visit goat farms with your club and discuss what you like best about their facilities and why. *
- 5) Draw a picture of your dream goat pen and where you would put the waterer, feeder, and shed, and dump the manure. *
- 6) Build a salt block holder out of wood and then stain it with a lead free stain. *

* activity is suitable for cloverbuds as well.