



Dairy Goat Society of Australia
Tasmania Branch

Breeding

There is a lot of planning and effort that goes into the breeding of dairy goats, long before there are any kids being born.

A dairy doe should be bred from around the age of 18 months onwards, which will have her kidding roughly at the age of two years. Although she can be put in kid at a younger age this puts a lot of strain on her young growing body and can have a negative impact on her health and development. Kids can become capable of breeding by three months of age so does and intact bucks should be separated before then.

Does begin to cycle in breeding season, which usually begins in late Summer, on average every 21 days. The easiest way to track this is to make a note on your calendar each time she comes into season until you are ready to start breeding. Once mated, allow the full 21 days (or whatever her cycle may be) to pass. If she does not come back into season then she is likely to be in kid. If she comes back into season then the mating was unsuccessful and it is time to try again.

It is important to choose a quality buck who will hopefully improve on any faults in the doe without adding any of his own to the resulting offspring. If you are using a buck from another breeder rather than owning one yourself make sure that you view the disease test results of that breeder's whole herd, and expect the buck's owner to want to see your herds' health paperwork too.

The cost of a stud service varies but can be equivalent to the value of one kid --a cheap price to pay compared to the costs of housing and feeding your own buck year 'round. If they are a member of the DGSA the breeder should be able to help you with the paperwork required to allow you to register the resulting kids.

The average gestation for a standard sized dairy goat is 150 days, or 145 for Nigerian Dwarfs. If you know the date she was served you will easily be able to determine her due date.

Her feeding requirements will not change at first as long as she is on a good quality diet. If she has kidded previously and is still in milk you will be able to continue milking for the first few months of pregnancy, although some does drop off in production when put back in kid. It is important to dry her off and allow her to have a rest for a minimum of six weeks before her due date.

As she reaches the end of her pregnancy you can gradually increase her food intake. You can also begin adding molasses to her water as it is a good source of energy (this is also very beneficial after kidding as along with the energy boost the flavour encourages her to drink more, which is vital to milk production.) Pregnant does also tend to consume a lot of salt so having a quality salt lick available is also advisable.

The kids she is carrying do a lot of their growing in the last month or so of pregnancy, so it is important that you check her feet and trim them ahead of this final major weight gain so she can continue to walk comfortably and access plenty of browse and hay.

If you haven't had much experience with the birth of animals or don't feel confident about possibly having to assist your labouring doe it is important to have the number of a good vet, experienced local breeder and/or the breeder you purchased your doe from.

After she has kidded, her food intake will increase in accordance with her milk production. If it is her first kidding you can expect her udder to change as her milk comes in and she settles into her lactation, and some patience will be required while training her to the milking stand and establishing a new milking routine.

Immediately after kidding your doe goes into major milk production, and keeping her rugged, well housed and properly fed will go a long way in helping her to recover from kidding and succeed as a milker.