



Dairy Goat Society of Australia
Tasmania Branch

Kid Rearing

Whether they were delivered by your doe or you purchased some kids from a breeder, baby goats are very cute and a lot of work!

If you have a pregnant doe it is very important to have a plan in place for the resulting kids. If she has triplet bucks, for example, you may not be able to keep them all, so you will need to have a back up in place. Once the kids are born it is very easy to get attached, so knowing what you intend to do ahead of time will make things easier.

You will also need to decide how you will be raising the kids ahead of time so you can prepare in advance.

The majority of dairy kids are hand raised. This is done for many reasons including wanting to milk the doe yourself, having quiet and friendly kids who are easy to handle, ensuring that all kids are getting enough to drink and knowing how much milk the doe is giving. If you plan to sell any of the kids it is much easier to put them on the bottle from the start and milk the doe (thereby taking on the role of her kid) than separating them several weeks or months down the line and dealing with a distraught doe and a kid who refuses to take a bottle and will suffer from the sudden nutritional deficit. If you intend to keep a buck kid for future breeding he will need to be separated from his mother and any sisters or other does to prevent any “accidents” before he is at a suitable age for weaning, and so is best bottle raised.

When done responsibly and with care, separating the doe and kids after birth causes no stress for the kids and very little for the doe.

You should have clean bottles and teats on hand ready to begin feeding the kids. They will need their first drink shortly after birth, which you can achieve by milking some colostrum from the doe into a bottle and then offering it to the kids. Some kids are very quick to begin sucking while others take a while to figure it all out. Patience and a gentle approach

are key, and having another breeder to mentor you through the kid-rearing process can help to make things go much more smoothly.

Good hygiene is vital to successfully raising healthy kids, as is consistency. Any changes (such as changing from milk to formula) should be done very gradually to prevent upset stomachs.

Young kids can take four bottles per day for the first month, then three, two, and one bottle per day before weaning. Most breeders wean their kids at around five months of age.

Grain and hay should be introduced in the kids' first week. They will play with it to start with and some will be wasted, but continue to replace soiled food with clean and fresh offerings and they will soon learn to eat it. Sweet muesli is a good starting point for grain. The sooner they are eating these solids the better their rumens will develop and the better they will do throughout their lives.

Fresh water should be made available in a shallow dish from one month of age onwards.