

Learning About Nigerian Dwarf Goats from Sunmeadow Farm.

This Small Goat Breed is Lovable and Gentle, and Produces a Surprising Amount of Milk for Its Size



Oreo & Ginger

The Nigerian Dwarf goat is a miniature goat of West African origin. Nigerian Dwarf goats are enjoying a rise in popularity due to their small size and colorful markings. Their small stature means they do not require as much space as larger dairy [goat breeds](#), and their gentle and friendly personalities make them good companion pets. They are easy to handle; even small children can be at ease with these little goats. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has also approved the Nigerian Dwarf goat as a livestock dairy goat, which makes them eligible for youth 4H and FFA projects.

Many cities are now allowing this miniature breed to be kept on city lots.

The Nigerian Dwarf is a Miniature Dairy Goat

A healthy Nigerian Dwarf doe can produce a surprising amount of sweet milk for her small size – up to two quarts per day. The all time breed leader for production for Nigerian Dwarfs gave 1601 pounds over a 305 day lactation. That's an average of about 5 and a quarter pounds a day. The Nigerian Dwarf [goat milk benefit](#) is that it is higher in butterfat (6-10%) than most dairy goat breeds. However, many

Nigerian Dwarf owners do not raise their goats for milk but for the pleasure and companionship, these little caprines bring to their lives.

Nigerian Dwarf Goat Conformation

A Nigerian Dwarf goat's conformation is similar to that of the larger dairy goat breeds. The parts of the body are in balanced proportion. The nose is straight, although there may be a small break or stop at the level of the eyes. The ears are upright. The coat is soft with short to medium hair. Any color or combination of colors is acceptable, although the silver agouti pattern and color are a moderate fault (Pygmy goat-specific markings).

The ideal height of Nigerian Dwarf goats is 17" to 19" for does with does up to 22.5" allowed in the breed standard. Ideal height for bucks is 19" to 21" with bucks up to 23.5" allowed in the breed standard. Ideal weight is suggested to be about 75 lbs. Animals are disqualified from the show ring for being oversized for the breed standard and/or for other faults: having a curly coat, roman nose, pendulous ears, or evidence of myotonia (a breed characteristic of fainting goats).



Hanley, a blue eyed buck.

Nigerian Dwarf Goat Temperament

Dwarf goats are gentle, lovable, and playful. Their calm, even temperament, and engaging personalities make them suitable companions for all, including children, the disabled, and the elderly. Even breeding bucks are handled easily. They make wonderful pets and great animal projects for young children in 4H or FFA. Breeders of other types of goats find their Dwarfs blend in with the rest of their herd and do not need special quarters; just adequate fencing to contain them because of their small size. Many Nigerian Dwarf goats share pastures peacefully with other livestock such as cattle, horses, and llamas and sheep. In fact, they will often improve a pasture by removing brambles, undergrowth (including weeds), and ivy (even poison ivy) that other livestock won't eat.

Accommodations

Goats should be kept in clean pens free of dampness, drafts, and pests like flies and rodents. They also require adequate fencing due to their small size. Nigerian Dwarf goats should not be housed in airtight buildings; they need to have ventilation for optimum health. For one to just a few goats, many owners find that an oversized dog house or two does the job. Pens or houses should be kept clean with fresh hay or straw for bedding. Many owners find that providing a few “toys” for the goats provides them with hours of caprine entertainment. Tree stumps, rocks, or large cable spools (plug the center hole to prevent injuries) are great for “king of the mountain” games and jumping. Just be sure to keep them away from the fence to avoid giving herd escape artists means to roam your neighborhood!

Breeding Nigerian Dwarf Goats

Dwarf goats breed year-round unlike most other goats that only breed in the Fall. Some owners breed their does three times in two years, giving the doe at least a 6-month break. Of course, this is a personal choice for each breeder. The gestation period for a doe is 145 to 153 days. For the most part, Nigerian Dwarfs are a hearty breed with few kidding problems. New babies average about 2-3 pounds at birth but grow quickly. Watch out for those little bucks! Bucklings can be fertile at as young as 7 weeks of age. Make sure you wean does and bucks separately to help you avoid unintentional breeding. Do not wether (neuter) a buck before 3 months old, this leads to urinary blockage.

Locate a breeder near you that can teach and assist you with things like hoof trimming, vaccinations, blood samples, stool samples, disbudding, tattooing, etc. Do not be afraid to ask. Experienced breeders are happy to share. For most of us it is our hobby and passion. Not a business.



Jewel at 3 days old.

Does can be bred at 7-8 months of age if they have reached a mature size. Some breeders prefer to wait until they are at least one year or older. Dwarf does can have several kids at a time, three and four being common with some quintuplet births occurring. Dwarfs are generally good mothers able to take care of their babies should you leave them to do the raising of the kids. They can also provide a surprising amount of milk for their size if you decide you are interested in goat milk or [making goat cheese or yogurt](#).

Bucks are able to be used for service as young as three months of age and easily by the time they are 7 or 8 months old. Dwarf bucks are vigorous breeders but are gentle enough to be used for hand breeding (contained) or pasture breeding where one buck is available for several does as they come into estrus. Both methods are used successfully.

Feeding Dwarf Goats

Most breeders feed a 12-18% protein goat feed or dairy ration. It must not contain urea as this is toxic to goats. Many breeders give less grain if good pasture and browse are available. Hay or pasture should always be provided in abundant supply as well as loose minerals. Fresh water in clean containers should also be available at all times.

Health Care

Dwarf goats, like all other breeds, need some basic care for good health and long life. Hooves should be trimmed regularly, about every four to eight weeks or more often if needed. A properly trimmed and shaped hoof should resemble those of a kid goat's hoof. Vaccinations for tetanus and types C&D clostridium perfringens are the basic types given. Check with your local vet for other vaccinations recommended for your area. Some experienced breeders may immunize their own goats; new owners and breeders should take their goats to the local vet for vaccines. Ideally does are vaccinated 30 days prior to kidding and kids are vaccinated at 6 weeks with a booster 3 weeks later. After that it is once a year. Worming should only be done after a fecal exam. Your vet can suggest any special supplements (such as selenium), additional immunizations, and a recommended wormer based on fecal exam results for your particular herd based on your area and known preventative health measures. When purchasing goats verify that they come from a clean, biosecurity tested herd. Primarily CL, CAE, and Johnes (pronounced "Yoh-Nees"). Also be aware that goats used for 4H, FFA and other shows cannot have horns. Some goats are naturally "Polled" (hornless) at birth. Others can be "disbudded" (horn prevention) at about 1 week of age. Goats with existing horns can sometimes be "de-horned" by a skilled veterinarian but it is expensive and risky. Better to buy polled or disbudded goats if you plan to show or use in 4H, FFA or shows.



Bandit

Nigerian Dwarf Goat Registries and Shows

Dwarf goats are registered in 5 registries: four in the United States (NDGA, AGS, IDGR & ADGA) and one in Canada (CGS). Dwarf shows are growing in popularity and are becoming more readily available all over the country. Shows are fun, educational, and a great way to meet other breeders and owners. They are a place to sell your goats or obtain superior stock for breeding. Shows or event information can be obtained through registries, local goat clubs, and organizations, including NDGA.

What's the Difference Between a Nigerian Dwarf and a Pygmy Goat?

Although they have similar origins, Nigerian Dwarfs and African Pygmies are separate and distinct breeds, with recognized differences. Nigerian Dwarf goats often carry a dominant gene for blue eyes. They are the only breed to carry the gene so if another apparent breed has blue eyes it has a Nigerian Dwarf in its ancestry. Pygmies are bred to be “cobby” and heavy boned. Dwarfs are bred to have the length of body and more elegant structure that’s similar to their larger dairy goat counterparts. Pygmies are also primarily “agouti” patterned, with black, silver, and caramel being the most common colors



Miracle

Nigerian Dwarf Goat Coloring

Color is one of the factors that makes breeding Nigerian Dwarfs so popular. You can never be sure what color the babies will be until they are born; even then you can't be sure because many times their color may change. The main color families are black, chocolate, and gold with virtually every color combination imaginable being produced. Dwarfs can be dalmatian-spotted, pinto-patterned, tri-colored, or just classy shades of solid jet black, white, chocolate, or gold. Buckskin patterns are also popular, described by contrasting facial stripes, a "cape" around the shoulders with a coordinating dorsal stripe, and leg markings. Brown eyes are the most common; however, dwarfs with China blue eyes are becoming increasingly popular and available.

Sunmeadow Farm, Worley, ID



George Jennings
Sunmeadow Farm
ADGA Registered Nigerian Dwarf Goats
Bigdog1rn@gmail.com
(541)408-1148

Preparing for Goat Ownership

First decide what you want goats for. Pets, dairy, meat, brush control, showing (4H, FFA), packing, mohair. Then research which breeds are best suited for what you want them for. The next step is to decide if you are properly set up. Examples: Pet goats can be any breed but generally smaller is better. Neutered (wethered) males often make the best pets. For small acreages or city lots small breeds (Nigerian Dwarf, Pygmy) may be more suited. Although any goat can become a meat goat breeds like the Boer are much larger and heavier but also require more space. For dairy use there are many breeds with Nubians and Nigerian Dwarfs producing the highest butterfat milk and I believe the best tasting. Nigerian Dwarf being much smaller produce about ½ the milk of a Nubian which generally produces over 1 gal./day. Brush clearing goats are generally any of the standard size goats, Nubian, Saanen, Lamacha, Alpine, Oberhasli, etc.