

GoatvetoZ Summer Newsletter

Goat Veterinary Consultancies - goatvetoZ

2023/24

Preparing bucks for the breeding season

Bucks are genetically half the herd so it is essential that bucks have better genetics than your does if you want to make progress with your breeding goals. This is not easy as there has only been one Meat & Livestock Australia funded Boer buck trial and unlike in dairy cattle, few dairy goat herds are herd recorded for milk production and composition. Linear appraisal is also not widely done in goats.

If purchasing a new buck for the coming breeding season, then consider the level of biosecurity risk you are prepared to accept. Any new goat is generally the way a new disease is introduced into your herd. Diseases such as CAE, Johne's disease, resistant parasites and even mycoplasmas can be introduced with a new goat. At least get a Goat Health Declaration. For dairy goats, the minimum

should be a history of negative whole herd tests for both CAE and Johne's disease. The purchased buck should be kept in quarantine for a month, while it is treated and tested 14 days later for worms, checked for lice and footrot and blood tests taken.

With hot temperatures, transportation and keeping bucks in small areas can lead to heat stress which can then cause a temporary infertility. Angora goats should be shorn before arrival. Heat can kill all the sperm in the testicles and it will take at least another 6 weeks to make more sperm from scratch.

If your farm property is large enough, then it is a good idea to keep your bucks well away from the sight and smell of your does before the breeding season. This will allow for the "buck effect" when the buck is introduced to your does. The sudden exposure of does to the smell of a

Bottle jaw

Bottle jaw is the name given to the clinical sign of swelling underneath the lower jaw of sheep and goats. This is caused by low protein levels in the blood. This causes fluid to leave the blood and accumulate in tissues in the lower parts of the body.

This is often associated with severe anaemia so goat owners should check the eye mucous membrane colour as shown in my YouTube goatvetoZ channel or specifically https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7_7CEeQZGc.

The most common cause of bottle jaw and anaemia is barbers pole worms or to use their scientific name, *Haemonchus contortus*. This can be confirmed by doing a worm egg count.

However bottle jaw can also be caused by:

- Johne's disease
- Liver fluke

Johne's disease can be confirmed by a blood test. Liverfluke eggs are heavier than normal worm eggs so need a specific test to confirm.

buck causes them to all come into heat. This means a tighter kidding which means less loss to predators such as foxes.

Ideally bucks should be given a breeding soundness examination by a veterinarian. The vet will measure the testicle width, feel the scrotal contents and possibly ultrasound the scrotum and do a semen evaluation.

The vet will also do a general physical examination as bucks need to be in good general health before the breeding season. Bucks need to be in good condition but not too fat. They must not be too old and have good teeth so they can graze well. They need to have good feet so they can run after does and mate them. Bucks should be watched carefully during their first matings to ensure that they manage to mate does. You must be observant as mating takes only a second. These observations will identify any back or hip pain that may stop a buck from breeding.

Bucks kept in single sex groups will engage in homosexual activity and a

preference for male companions. Adding an older female to buck kids being reared together has been shown to encourage young bucks to prefer female companions (Lacuesta et al, 2018).

Young buck kids can be fertile at 3 months, but should not be used until at least 6 months of age. Young bucks should be mated to only a few does in the first breeding season. Recommended buck to doe %s in large herds are 5% for mature bucks.

Bucks need high quality roughage or green feed to ensure they have plenty of Vitamin A. Stock carrots are an excellent Vitamin A source if only dry hay is available. A mineral lick or mix suitable for your district is also essential. Zinc, Copper and Selenium are needed for fertility, although the last 2 minerals are toxic if your farm is not really deficient.

Do you use X, Threads or Tumbler?

See all my tweets at www.twitter.com/goatvet

If you have decided to leave Twitter/X you can follow me on Tumblr or Threads.

Coughing goats

Goats can cough for a range of reasons. Coughing can be one sign of pneumonia and this can be very serious. These goats will have a high rectal temperature (above 40C or 104 F) and often have a high respiratory rate ie above 30 for adults or 40 breathes per minutes for kids.

Sometimes coughing goats are healthy and eating well but just cough. This could be due to:

- allergies to something in the air e.g. a type of pollen
- dusty hay or feed -mouldy feed
- lung worm - you need to test for lungworm larvae (not eggs) in the faeces via a Baermann test. Lungworms live in the lungs and lay their eggs there and these eggs are coughed up and swallowed. By the time the faeces come out of the anus, these lungworm eggs have already hatched so are not found on a normal worm egg count. Lungworms are generally only a problem on wet land or irrigated pastures.
- a form of mycoplasma - the history suggests an introduction of a mycoplasma infected carrier goat.