

Goatveto Winter Newsletter

Goat Veterinary Consultancies - goatveto

Spring 2025

What can your goat's faeces (poo) tell you?

When kids are born they produce meconium, which is a black sticky tar like poo. It is made up of all the lining cells that the developing intestines made and shed while in the womb. When kids get stuck in the birth canal, this meconium can be pushed out into the foetal fluids and the kid is born a dirty yellow colour. If the doe's mucous is dirty yellow and a kid hasn't come out, then call your vet.

The next poo that the kid produces is a yellow colour and thick and paste like. Take care that the kid's anus doesn't get blocked by a big lot of poo stuck on the outside. Kids on their mother get licked to remove it but if bottle reared, then a wet cloth may be needed to wipe the kid's behind.

When the kid is no longer getting colostrum then the kid should be producing normal little separate black pellets. These pellets get bigger as the kid grows into an adult. Manure pellets

should be warm and moist when freshly passed.

So what is NOT normal?

MUCOUS – sometimes there is mucous surrounding the pellets. This is a sign of gut irritation and the most likely cause is gastrointestinal parasitism, either worms or coccidia, so send off some faecal pellets to a lab for a worm egg count.

WHITE BITS – if white segments like grains of rice are present then these are tapeworm segments. Research in sheep showed that tapeworms did not affect lamb growth rates. However heavy infections in kids causing them to be pot-bellied, may be worthwhile treating. In Australia, we can use praziquantel to kill the tapeworms but unfortunately it is not sold alone as a drench. It is sold with another drench like abamectin and unfortunately only in large drums. Albendazole can be used but it does not kill the tapeworm head so eventually the segments will re-appear.

BLOOD – if there is red blood in the poo, this can be

a sign of coccidiosis. It is a sign of damage to the gut wall.

BLOOD AND TISSUE – this can be caused by enterotoxaemia or very severe coccidiosis. Both require immediate veterinary attention.

CLUMPED PELLETS – this can be another sign of worms. So send off some faeces to a lab for a worm egg count. It could also be diet related.

ROCK HARD – this can be a sign of dehydration or poor quality feed that requires a long period of time in the gastro-intestinal tract to try and extract the maximum nutrients. It can also be a sign of other illnesses. Normal faeces should be soft and moist when passed.

UNDIGESTED GRAINS – A couple of grains found within faecal pellets can be normal, especially if whole grains are fed. However if there is a lot of grain and not inside pellets, there is also a sweet or sick smell, then this could be a sign of rumen acidosis so ask family members if the goats have

escaped and goats got into chicken feed or the feed storage area. Again urgent vet attention is needed.

LOOSE or DIARRHOEA -

This can be most likely worms again. The most common worms are *Trichostrongylus* and *Teladorsagia* [previously named *Ostertagia*] *circumcincta*, *Haemonchus* or Barbers Pole worms do not cause loose faeces. Coccidiosis can also cause loose faeces, mainly in kids or very stressed adults. Again send off a faecal sample to a lab. Sudden diet changes can also cause loose faeces but these self-correct in a day or two especially if dry hay is fed. Johne's disease, salmonellosis and yersiniosis can also cause bouts of loose faeces in goats. If you have not heard about these diseases then you should do my scouring in goats course (email goatvetoz@gmail.com). Poisonous plants are another possible cause of diarrhoea.

Drenching a goat

How do you treat your goats for worms? Some use a syringe to drench their goats. While this can work, quite often some of the drench doesn't go down the goat's

throat and dribbles out of the goat's mouth. You can buy a single use drench gun for just over \$20 and these have a long nozzle that goes over the goat's tongue and so goats are forced to swallow the drench. Keep the goat's head horizontal so there is then minimal risk of the drench going into the lungs. I have a YouTube video on how to drench a goat - <https://www.youtube.com/@goatvetoz>. Subscribe if you like my drenching video as I have more videos planned.

I also use a plastic medicine measuring container and pour the drench dose into and then suck up the goat's dose into the drench gun. This means the metal part of the drench gun i.e. the nozzle, never goes into the drench container. The nozzle goes into the goat's mouth so you don't want any germs transferred into the remaining drench. Everything should be washed out in warm soapy water then rinsed and air dried after use.

The first time you use a drench and when reaching to almost the bottom of the drench container, you should do a DrenchCheck (see [https://wormboss.com.au/tests-tools/checking-for-drench-resistance-with-a-](https://wormboss.com.au/tests-tools/checking-for-drench-resistance-with-a-drenchcheck/)

[drenchcheck/](https://wormboss.com.au/tests-tools/checking-for-drench-resistance-with-a-drenchcheck/)) which is basically doing worm egg counts before and 14 days after drenching. Larval cultures are also suggested as it may be just one species of worms that has developed resistance. Ideally there should be zero eggs after drenching but a 95% reduction or more is acceptable. Any less than 90% means resistance is developing and you need to change to a different family of drench active. There is no point in buying more of the same drench if it is no longer working properly.

Most authorities advise that goats should be drenched for worms and not treated by injections or pour-ons. Research has shown that injections and pour-ons lead to long periods of time with small amounts of active ingredients in the goats body which can lead to the development of drench resistant worms (see www.wormx.info).

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See all my tweets at <https://x.com/goatvet> If you have decided to leave X you can follow me on Bluesky, Tumblr, Instagram, Youtube or Threads as goatvetoz.