

Meat Goat Production Calendar

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Introduction

As with any other animal enterprise, it is important to keep good records and have a plan to follow when managing your goat herd.

Using a production calendar for managing your herd not only gives you a schedule to follow for production but allows for timely breeding of does and management for specific markets. The calendar also allows for successful parasite and disease control on a consistent and regular basis. It should be combined with a comprehensive record system so that you know what you have done as well as what is to be done in the future.

This calendar is to be used as a guide to assist you in developing a protocol for your management program. Dates are suggestions but

must conform to your management scheme. This does not mean that you can be tardy in accomplishing certain tasks. Some tasks should be conducted promptly and routinely while other management practices may have greater flexibility. By recording each practice as it is conducted, you then can go back in following years and relate the timeliness to the success of the practice.

Also, some practices may vary from year to year; i.e., the number of times deworming is needed per year depends on rainfall, intensity of grazing and stocking rate. Nothing beats doing fecal egg counts to determine deworming schedules. Periodically, look at the previous month and the next month to see if a management practice should be conducted in the present month.

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JANUARY

- Check water for freezing when temperature is below 32°F.
- Evaluate forage conditions and inventory.
- Monitor body condition of does and supplement if necessary.
- Feed hay stored outside before hay stored inside or wrapped.
- Provide trace mineralized salt free choice.
- Prepare for kidding.
- If your does do not get selenium daily in their ration, they may need an injectable selenium supplement such as Bo-Se shots before kidding. The type will depend upon the area of the country in which you live. Ask your vet to make sure.
- Vaccinate does for enterotoxemia types C and D at least 30 days before kidding.
- Verify that you have frozen colostrums on hand for first kids.
- Collect and/or purchase colostrum for kids. Make sure it is from

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older does with good immunity. Strong iodine for dipping navels, towels for drying kids, intrauterine boluses (in case intervention at kidding is needed) and propylene glycol (about a quart) in case of ketosis are also needed. And don't forget nipples and bottles.

- It is time to pen breed all does that you want to freshen that still may not be pregnant or that you are not sure have conceived. Do not use prostaglandins on a doe that might be pregnant.
- Consider visiting one of the winter shows; it's a good experience and a good winter outing.
- Give dry does a good exam each day; usually visual exams are all that are needed. Potential problems can be picked up early and dealt with easier.
- Give your does a midwinter brushing; they will appreciate the attention. You may also detect health problems.
- Trim feet, especially pregnant does.
- Encourage pregnant does to get exercise.
- If wet conditions exist, feed on higher, drier areas.
- If you are using lighting to change heat cycles to breed does for fall production, turn on the barn timers January 1 for 20-hour light days for both does and bucks.
- Keep your New Year's resolutions.
- Treat for internal and external parasites.
- Check your tattoo set and make sure you have ink and the letters and numbers that you need.
- Does should be checked twice a day. This allows you to notice potential problems – before they become disasters.
- Trim hooves as needed.
- Place warm water in kidding areas when possible.
- Cutting beards off will make it easier for goats to drink and does not give them a cold icicle chin.
- Check for lice. Dust with an appropriately labeled lice powder.
- Fill out registry applications on kids as you tattoo them. If you need more applications, a local print shop can photocopy them. Fill in all details as needed – color and markings, etc.
- Disbud kids within three to four days after birth (if disbudding).
- Keep buck kids from outstanding does only. Wether the rest or sell for meat.
- Freeze extra colostrum in ice cube trays for future use.
- Consider adding legumes to 50 percent of summer pastures.
- Feed on high spots and areas of good footing.
- Soil test to determine fertilization rates in the spring.

FEBRUARY

- Evaluate forage conditions and inventory.
- Review your marketing plan before the kids are born, and determine where to improve this year and next year.
- Sort pregnant from open does.
- Begin feeding extra feed to pregnant does.
- Evaluate does and bucks; sell unsound or inferior animals.

MARCH

- Evaluate forage conditions and inventory.
- Begin or continue kidding, check teats for milk flow and identify kids.
- Continue to supplement lactating does as needed.

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- Consider weaning small, stunted kids. Check to see if they have a disease problem or if the mother is not milking well.
- Discontinue supplemental feeding to does if pasture is good or economics dictate.
- Remember to wether or to separate buck kids from doe kids by 10 weeks of age.
- Train your kids to show by having their legs handled and positioned while they are drinking their bottles (if you sell kids for show).
- To stay ahead of parasites, have your vet check fecal samples. Then double-check your worming program. Remember – healthy kids and grown animals can die suddenly from parasite damage.
- Vaccinate your kids for enterotoxemia types C and D before putting them on grain.
- Be sure to provide clean water, good-quality hay and grain for your kids.
- Weaning should be done by weight and conditioning rather than age. Kids weighing 25 to 35 pounds can be weaned, but be sure they are eating hay and grain well. Provide adequate nutrition and management.
- Double-check all the doe kids for extra teats and abnormalities before it is time to send the kids to market. Cull any abnormal kids.
- Turn off the timers on the barn lights March 1 to shorten the light-days for does (and bucks) you plan to breed for fall kidding.
- Use the electric clippers to prepare does for kidding. Trim long hair off tail, rump and the udder area.
- Sell some kids on the Easter kid market if prices are strong.
- Fertilize according to soil test recommendations.
- Graze fescue pastures early. If annual ryegrass or other winter annuals are available, graze all lactating does on best forage.

APRIL

- Continue kidding and observe does and kids daily.
- Discontinue supplemental feeding to does as economics dictate.
- Evaluate forage conditions and inventory.
- Scours can be caused by coccidiosis, a constant but sometimes undetected threat to kids. Treat if needed. Kid starter should include a coccidiostat.
- Begin preparing for spring shows. Brush up on your showmanship. Be sure your animal is used to being handled and led. (Remember – a showmanship animal should be especially gentle and should be an appropriate size for you.)
- For dairy goat owners, plan ahead to “Promote the Goat” during National Dairy Month – JUNE. Begin putting together a press release for area newspapers. Give them a list of goat owners and “happenings” for interviews and “photo opportunities.”
- Give the kids a special pen outside on nice days where they can enjoy the sunshine and start to nibble on a little grass.
- Outside hay feeders will reduce manure buildup in the barn.
- Clean out manure from barns and use as fertilizer.
- Light-treated does for fall freshening should start cycling in heat six weeks after you turned off the timers. The heats will be short. Pen them with a buck for best results. Two bucks are more effective, if you don’t plan to keep purebred kids.
- Review your financial budget to review the status of expenses and expected receipts.
- Ask – Do my animals look as good as I would like? Do management practices need to be changed.
- Sell some kids on the Easter kid market if prices are strong and Easter is late.

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- Fertilize according to soil test recommendations.
- Graze fescue pastures early. If annual ryegrass or other winter annuals are available, graze all lactating does on best forage.
- Monitor body condition of nursing does and supplement as needed.
- Graze fescue closely to keep it vegetative.
- Harvest extra hay fescue and winter annuals as hay.
- Rotate pastures to minimize exposure to internal parasites.
- Clip pastures to keep them growing vegetatively.
- Fertilize pastures as recommended.
- Trim feet on the whole herd. Remember the kids.
- Monitor body condition of nursing does and supplement as needed.
- Graze fescue closely to keep it vegetative.
- Harvest extra hay fescue and winter annuals as hay.
- Rotate pastures to minimize exposure to internal parasites.
- Seed summer annuals for forage, according to Extension recommendations.

MAY

- Discontinue supplemental feeding to does as economics dictate.
- Plant summer annuals for pasture, if needed. Do other pastures seem healthy and growing well?
- Feed kids at regular hours each day. Be sure feed, hay and water are fresh and clean.
- Watch your animals while they eat; are they energetic? Watch for ones that are off feed, sluggish (ears can be an indication of how they feel) or starting with scours or bloat.
- At the first sign of scours, consider treating with a coccidiostat. Better yet, have your vet check fecal samples to identify any parasite that might be involved.
- Make sure you save enough colostrum from those last does to freshen, to heat treat and freeze for the start of the kidding season next year.
- In smaller herds, it is time to give all your goats a clipping overall, whether they are going to be shown or not. This will help control external parasites and make them cooler and cleaner for the hot weather.

JUNE

- Plant winter annuals if overseeding bermuda.
- Evaluate forage conditions and inventory.
- Begin looking for replacement bucks with good conformation, structural correctness, muscling and high weight per day of age.
- This is the time of year to get good photos of your does and bucks. You will need the photos later when you make up your sales list and/or advertise.
- Don't wait for parasites to become a problem. Talk to your vet about a parasite prevention program for your herd. Remember – wet, warm weather and the use of pasture increase worm problems.
- Watch dry stock. To keep them from becoming excessively fat, restrict their grain and encourage pasture and forage consumption.
- Start planning your winter program now. Which does will be bred early and which will be bred late?
- You should have your breeding program for this fall well thought out by now. Do you have a buck? If using artificial insemination, have you ordered the semen that you want to use?
- Fly time – be sure all control methods are in force.

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- Check new hay for dryness to prevent mold later.
- Clip pastures to keep them growing vegetatively.
- Fertilize pastures as recommended.
- Cut excess pasture as hay if quantities are adequate to justify baling; if not, clip and fertilize to keep the forage vegetative and growing well.

JULY

- Evaluate forage conditions and inventory.
- Continue selecting replacement bucks.
- Monitor internal parasites through fecal samples. Deworm as needed to keep goats healthy.
- Watch for heat stress in heavy milkers and young kids. Pneumonia can be a summer problem that isn't always spotted. Check kids under stress regularly.
- This is the time to get your good-quality hay lined up and into your barn. Some hay dealers will give you a price break if they deliver directly from their field to your barn.
- Clip your pastures. Doing so will help control the weeds that goats won't eat and promote the growth of good forage. Goats eat some weeds.
- Whether you show or not, take time to support the local 4-H and FFA youth; go to the local fair and see their projects.
- Promote a fitting contest in your area for the youth.
- Take time to "smell the flowers" and pet your goats.
- Maintain fly control.
- Weigh your kids. February kids should weigh at least 50 pounds.
- Cut excess pasture as hay if quantities are adequate to justify baling; if not, clip and fertilize to keep the forage vegetative and growing well.
- Consider weed-eating and spraying to control weeds. Keep homestead looking nice.

AUGUST

- Evaluate forage conditions and inventory.
- Treat for internal and external parasites.
- Wean kids and supplement replacement does and bucks with a high protein (21 percent), high energy feed.
- Evaluate does and bucks; sell unsound and inferior animals.
- Watch for heat stress in all animals.
- Criteria for culling:
 - Barren females – missed two seasons in a row
 - Bad teats or udders – too big or too small (mastitis)
 - Bad mouths – smooth or broken mouths or over- or under-shot jaw
 - Structural defects – bad feet and legs or back
 - Bad testicles – too small or infected (epididymitis)
 - Unthriftiness – due to old age or disease
- Start the month by giving your bucks a good examination and their selenium shot, if needed; check the housing for the bucks to make sure that it is escape proof.
- Begin preparing for the breeding season. Pull out your production records and decide which does will be bred early and which will be bred later.
- Have you completed your AI plans yet? Semen should be in your tank before the end of the month to allow plenty of time for your AI breedings.
- Don't forget to look at this past year's show schedule. Will there be any schedule changes? Breed your does with next year's shows in mind.
- Breed by weight rather than by age. Doelings should have reached about 65 percent of their adult weight at breeding time.
- Check your AI equipment. Is it all in working order? Do you have all the supplies that you need?
- Hot weather (dog days of summer) means providing extra water buckets and a few fans.

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- Say something nice to the judge who places your animals at the fair and to the officials who worked to make it happen.
- When moving animals, try to minimize stress on animals by doing so during cooler nights.
- Make entries to fall fairs and livestock shows.
- Cut excess pasture as hay if quantities are adequate to justify baling; if not, clip and fertilize to keep the forage vegetative and growing well.
- Consider weed-eating and spraying to control weeds. Keep homestead looking nice.
- Keep fences in good repair to prevent breeding accidents.
- Check water quality if it appears to be a problem.
- Cut excess pasture as hay if quantities are adequate to justify baling; if not, clip and fertilize to keep the forage vegetative and growing well.
- Consider weed-eating and spraying to control weeds. Keep homestead looking nice.
- Plan for the Arkansas State Fair.

SEPTEMBER

- Sow winter annuals by early September if adequate moisture is in the soil.
- Evaluate forage conditions and inventory.
- Begin flushing does and bucks. Flush with fresh green pasture or 1/2 pound feed/head/day for 2 to 3 weeks before and after breeding season.
- Treat for lice if necessary.
- Does bred this month will kid in February.
- If you will be using bucks from others, be sure you have contacted the owners and have made arrangements.
- Start watching your does/doelings for signs of heat. Mark it on your calendar. They should recycle in 18 to 21 days. A doe that cycles regularly allows you to plan ahead and is a good AI prospect.
- In 4-H and FFA, start setting goals for your goat project. If this is your first year, your leader or teacher can help you set up your records. Plan to attend one or two county or state fairs. Undertake a goat-related project such as shop, dairy foods, nutrition, veterinary science, livestock judging, fitting and showing, or photography.
- Have you dewormed all the does so they are ready to breed? Bucks also?
- Clean up and store show equipment for next season, if the season is complete.

OCTOBER

- Plant winter annuals if overseeding bermuda-grass or tilling the soil.
- Evaluate forage conditions and inventory.
- Turn out bucks with does; breeding ratio: one buck per 20 to 25 does, depending on pasture size and breeding conditions.
- Continue to flush does for 2 to 3 weeks after buck turnout.
- Provide best quality forage to does and bucks in breeding herd.
- Does bred this month will freshen in March.
- Have special buck-handling pullovers ready for use to help keep odor from your regular clothes.
- Have your winter housing completed. Remember, goats need a place to get in out of the cold drafts and rain.
- Test hay for nutrient content.
- Your AI plans should be complete with tentative date and site for semen collection.
- It is time for you to order dry mastitis treatments for dairy goats. Does that have had any problems or do not have good texture to their mammary systems are candidates for dry treatment if they are dairy goats.

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- Is your show equipment in good repair for fall and/or winter shows? Do blankets need repairing? Are your clipper blades sharp?
- Take the time to closely observe your bucks; are they losing weight due to the breeding season? You may need to increase their grain and check for parasites.
- Plan to attend your breed conventions and shows. This is a good learning experience.
- Cleanup and store show equipment for next season, if season is complete.

NOVEMBER

- Evaluate forage conditions and inventory. Buy hay if needed.
- Determine does' body condition and plan winter supplemental feeding program.
- Monitor internal parasites through fecal samples. If the parasite load is heavy, treat after first hard freeze.
- Does that are bred this month will kid in April.
- Make arrangements to pregnancy check with ultrasound if you question whether does are pregnant. Does need to be 40 days pregnant to be checked.
- Does should be placed on a coarse mixed hay. They should be in good condition but not allowed to get fat. Plenty of exercise is important to guard against pregnancy toxemia.
- Place heat tape on barn water lines; check to make sure they work. Do barn maintenance as needed.
- This is a good time to check on all your medical supplies and order those that you need. It is necessary to remove the medical supplies to a place that does not freeze. Iodine that has been frozen is no good.
- Breed large kids that weigh 75 to 80 pounds.

- Harvesting the garden? Extra carrots and turnips make good goat treats.
- If needed, begin grazing stockpiled forages.
- Check all equipment and conduct maintenance as needed.
- Plan to attend educational meetings.

DECEMBER

- Evaluate forage conditions and inventory.
- Remove bucks, and feed to regain body condition when breeding season is complete.
- Evaluate range and pasture condition.
- Watch body condition of does and supplement if necessary.
- Check for lice, and use a pour-on lice treatment if needed.
- Does bred this month will freshen in May. Does due to kid in February should be dried off.
- Breeding season will be coming to an end soon. If you have not settled a doe by AIing her by now, it is time to breed her naturally if you want to make sure she will kid this spring.
- Check your kidding supplies. Make orders now. Nipples deteriorate fast and need to be replaced periodically.
- Start to get your kidding pens ready for the kidding season. They should be clean and sanitized.
- Remember that ample exercise is good for all your goats, especially the pregnant ones.
- Keep a close eye on the mood of your pregnant does; the change in mood or habit can be the first indication of a problem.
- Limit salt to pregnant does to avoid excessive water retention. Normally, 1 percent in the grain ration is sufficient.

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- Check ventilation of the barn in cold weather to be sure plenty of fresh air without drafts is provided. Condensation of the roof or walls of buildings indicates poor ventilation as well as the presence of offensive odors.
 - Review all facilities to minimize exposure of goats to nails, debris, mud or manure.
 - Make your New Year's resolutions.
 - Assemble records to determine costs and where to improve for next year. What is your tax liability?
- Should you have additional expenses before the end of the year to better utilize your tax deductions?
- Is your marketing plan sufficient? How can you improve it for next year?
 - If needed, begin grazing stockpiled forages.
 - Check all equipment and conduct maintenance as needed.
 - Plan to attend educational meetings.

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