



The Goat Source

The Goat Source Newsletter *Volume 3 Number 6 June 2006*

Here is your June issue of The Goat Source Newsletter. It has been very dry in our part of the world. Even though the mountains received quite a bit of snow this spring, it is melting fast and we have not had much rain. Some farmers have had their wells red-tagged and will most likely lose their crops and maybe their farms. Let's hope it rains before it comes to that!!

I went to the machinery auction a couple of weeks ago looking for a wheelbarrow and came home with a tractor! (A small one). I really shouldn't go to auctions!!

Please feel free to pass this newsletter on to your friends.

What's New This Month?

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Pasturing your goats and poisonous plants

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This is the time of year that the pastures are greening up in my part of the world. Along with the fresh green grass, there are also some plants that are toxic to our animals. It is a good idea to walk your pastures frequently and look for these invaders. Get a good handbook on poisonous plants and become familiar with the ones common in your area. There are different strategies for dealing with unwanted plants. If there are not too many of them, removing them by hand and disposing of them is OK, but if you have a large pasture or a huge invasion of toxic plants this becomes a time consuming!! Many plants that are not good for other animals, goats can eat with no ill effects, but some will make your goats sick or even kill them!!

If you have multiple pastures so that you can rotate, spot spraying with a weed killer can work, but be very careful about wind drift and residue. **READ THE INSTRUCTIONS!!!!** **TAKE ALL PRECAUTIONS LISTED ON THE LABEL!!!** Herbicides are **TOXIC!!** Please be careful!!!

Biological controls are available for certain weeds. Contact the Extension Service, Weed Control office or Soil Conservation District - they will probably be able to help you or point you in the right direction. They are slow but not usually harmful to your animals.

Mowing can be a tactic for some weeds – early mowing will help control some weeds, which go to seed very early. Get it before the seed heads mature and you will cut down on the amount that are spread around.

Factors that may contribute to plant poisoning are starvation, accidental eating and browsing habits of animals. Starvation can cause goats to eat many things they would not normally touch. Always make sure your goats are full before putting them out on new pasture. This will cut down on the amount of things they eat and the chance for poisoning and bloat. Woodlands and swampy pastures may contain many species of poisonous plants. These are usually not the feed of choice and are eaten when there is nothing else to eat, such as in the spring when nothing else is green.

Especially dangerous are the branches of fruit trees with fruit that contains a pit (cherry, peach, plum, etc.). The wilted leaves contain prussic acid (hydrocyanic acid), a deadly poison that interferes with the oxygen-carrying ability of the blood, and may cause sudden death in otherwise healthy animals. Never let people throw branches of browse into your goat pens as a “snack.” If they have these treats for them, let them pile them outside the pen and you can inspect them. **Make sure they have not been sprayed** with anything such as insecticides.

Use your common sense as to what you will allow your goats to eat.

Have a look at this website for more information:

<http://netvet.wustl.edu/species/goats/goatpois.txt>

This Month's Quiz

How much does a gallon of milk weigh?

Training Your Goats

Once a long time ago, a woman was at my place and wanted to look at one of my does. So, I went over to the fence and said “Sugar – come here!” And, Sugar’s head came up and here she came. The lady was amazed! “They know their names?” she asked. Yes, they know their names and they can be trained!! I try to train all of my goats to do a few simple things that make my life easier.

Come when called, Get up on the stand (Up or Hup), and Give me your foot (or give your foot, dammit) are a few of the commands I use.

The babies learn early that when I make a trilling noise (I can't whistle) it means "Come here there is food!!" Repetition is the key. If you do this every time you feed the kids, they learn to associated it with a pleasurable event (food) and come right to you. I do the same with the yearlings when I put them on the stand – I give them the up or hup command every time and when they get up, there is grain. Food is a great motivator for goats!!

"Give me your foot" is harder - there is no immediate reward and foot trimming is not their favorite thing. If you repeat it enough and they get a treat afterward, eventually it sinks in. "No" can be taught with the aid of a spray bottle. Goats really don't like water on their face and will usually back off if the bad behavior is followed **immediately** by a squirt in the face. Remember, goats are about as intelligent as dogs but most of them really don't care if they please you or not, so training them is a matter of persistence and repetition!! It can be done!!

Classified Ads...

Enroll in the Cheap Cheap University and learn how to get more month for your money!!
<http://www.cheapcheapu.com>

Get the Digital Beginners Pack – made with the beginning goat keeper in mind. Resources to find the answers to your questions, forms for recordkeeping, articles and more.
[Click Here to Begin Learning!!](#)

Subscribe to the Myotonic Messenger, the quarterly magazine of the International Fainting Goat Association www.faintinggoat.com

Answer to the May Quiz:

A gallon of milk weights 8 pounds. Learn more about milk - here is a link for suggested reading about raw milk.
<http://www.realmilk.com/suggested.html>

Helpful hints:

A quick temporary marker to tell which kids belong to what doe is a splash of non-toxic food coloring on both kids and doe. Or, a livestock-marking crayon can be used.

On the subject of color – old-fashioned bluing can be used in your rinse water after you have washed your goat to make the white hair whiter. Don't use to much or you will have a blue goat!

I buy my custom mix goat grain one half ton at a time and get a nice discount. If you don't have enough animals to buy that much grain at one time, get several friends with goats together that use the same mix and buy it all at once. This is how our goat club used to do it

back many years ago when goat mix was unheard of and in order to get what we wanted, we had to have it mixed to order. (About custom mix – Many thanks to my feed store Cache La Poudre Feeds for not only providing a top quality product but also mixing it for me on very short notice when I misjudged how much grain I had left in the barn!!)

That's all for this month,...
See you next month!!

Leslie, The Goat Source

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