



The Goat Source

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November 2004 Newsletter Volume 1 Number 7

Is My Goat in Heat? How do you tell, Anyway?

Breeding season is here and catching your doe in heat is the order of the day. For some, it is as simple as putting the buck in with the does and letting nature take it's course. For those without a buck it can be a little more complicated.

Goats are **seasonally polyestrous**. This means that they come into heat multiple times at a certain time of the year. For goats in our continent, this means fall during the time when the daylight is decreasing. The first noticeable heat may not be fertile and your doe may come back in heat. Most does cycle on an 18 to 21 day period every day until bred or until the season changes and they stop cycling. With the Swiss breeds, you should try to breed them early. They tend not to cycle as late into the winter as other breeds. Nubians may cycle as late as March, and as early as August. Plan your breeding with an eye on when you want kids. Some herds may show extensively and need their does fresh and in peak milk when the shows are scheduled. Other herds may want kids ready for the early meat market. Five months is the gestation for goats give or take a little depending on breed.

A doe in heat may be easy to spot if she exhibits all the classic behaviors of heat. These include tail flagging, restlessness, making a lot of noise, mounting other goats, and depressed milk production. Some goats show all these symptoms and some have **silent heats**. A goat with a silent heat can be very hard to detect. Teasing with a buck may help to spot these goats. Sometimes you have to tease the doe every day, twice a day until she shows interest. If you don't have ready access to a buck, make a **buck rag**. Get a friend with a buck to rub a rag on the buck until it is good and smelly. Keep it in an airtight jar and let the doe smell it twice a day. If she reacts to it, then try to breed her. I have had some does that almost tried to eat the rag when they were in heat! Other does won't do a thing. As a last resort, the doe may have to be run with the buck for at least three weeks or more to get her bred. If you are using artificial insemination, a doe with good solid, easy to detect heats will be a better candidate than a hard to catch doe.

Keep good records. Write down every time you think a doe cycles. I have a code on the calendar that tells me what kind of heat occurred and if a breeding was completed. Then 18 days later I put a reminder to watch for heat in that doe. If I think a doe is settled (pregnant) than I go ahead and put down a due date for her. When the last doe is bred and is past 45 days, I usually ultrasound all of them to see who is really bred and who isn't. This gives me a chance to catch the open does and rebreed them or cull them. The results of the ultrasound are recorded on the calendar and the due dates adjusted if need be. A write- wipe board in the barn can come in useful for jotting down notes. These can be transferred to the calendar later.

Observe your goats carefully and your success rate with heat detection will improve with time. Good Luck!

The apple trees are loaded this year and the goats think this is a great treat! We have picked over 200#'s of apples in the last two weeks. The culls go into a bucket and at milking time, every doe gets one or two chopped up in her grain bucket. Some of them love them and one or two turn up their nose at them. Remember – Go easy on the treats, or you will have a sick goat!



This month's Quiz:

What is the normal body temperature of a goat?

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Answer to the November Quiz

The normal body temperature of the goat is 103 degrees (F). I use one of the new digital thermometers and I love it! Nubians don't like having their temp taken and this makes it much quicker! Remember - a black goat on a hot day may show a higher temp and still be normal. If in doubt, take the temperatures of two or three other goats and compare them.

See you next month! Leslie The Goat Source