



The Goat Source

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October 2004 Newsletter Volume 1 Number 6

The Laws of Nature As They Apply to Goat Raising

1. No matter which way the wind is blowing, when you throw the hay into the feeder, it will change directions and blow the hay in your face.
2. No matter how many layers of clothing you have on, the hay will get into the last layer and poke you all day.
3. If a goat can tip something over and make a loud noise, she will.
4. After tipping something over, the above mentioned goat will jump straight up in the air with appropriate panic.
5. A goat's head will fit in a very small hole in the fence. Of course it won't come back out! (I recommend petroleum jelly to grease the way out).
6. Hay feeders are just right to sleep in.
7. Slept in hay is not good to eat anymore. After all, it had someone laying on it.
8. Water should only touch the lips. Anywhere else is cause for hysterics.
9. If you put a clean bucket of water in your goats' pen at a show, she will dribble hay in it or poop in it immediately. She can't be expected to drink this of course, it's DIRTY!
10. Shoelaces are to be untied and chewed on.
11. Show whites are to be used to wipe baby goat feet on.
12. A goat can jump up on the barn roof, but is unable to get up on the milk stand (which is all of 8" off the floor).
13. When you walk in the show ring, your goat will forget how to walk.
14. The grain in the bucket that your goat has is not nearly as good as the grain in the bucket her neighbor goat has (it all came out of the same bag).
15. The weeds on the path on the way to the barn are delicious. The same weeds in the goat pasture are 4 feet tall.
16. Raising goats is never dull.

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It's Breeding Season (so why am I talking about culling?)

It's time to think about which buck you are going to use on your does this fall. What does this have to do with culling? If you have a doe that is marginal, now is the time to cull her before you put another winter's worth of work and feed into her. If she isn't good enough to pull her weight, then maybe you really don't need kids out of her. Take a good hard look at your doe herd. Are there animals that just don't do well? Ones that are sick all the time? Any animal that requires a bunch of special attention just to remain healthy and still just does OK is a candidate for culling. Remember that the more attention you spend on animals you don't enjoy takes attention away from the ones you do enjoy.

Sometimes there are exceptions, like the old doe who has had kids every year faithfully and now is too old to keep up. She has earned her retirement. But the yearling who lost her kids, doesn't milk, or has poor conformation is another story.

Choosing a buck for your doe's means looking at the faults they have and trying to improve them. Pick three traits that are really important to you and look for a buck that will (hopefully) fix them. Why three? Because, the more things you try to fix the less effect you will get. Usually I look at one major trait and two minor ones. An example would be milk production (major), height at the withers (minor) and rear udder attachment (minor). This does not mean that the trait itself is minor, just that it isn't as important as getting improvement in the major trait (milk production).

Back to culling. If you have a doe that has too many faults, don't expect to find a buck that will fix everything. The doe with too many faults is a good choice to cull. Keep the ones that do what you need them to do, and cull the rest. Most goatkeepers make the mistakes of keeping everything and when they are overwhelmed with chores, wonder why goats aren't any fun anymore. Don't fall into this trap. Cull what you need to and enjoy the rest.

I went to the open house at the local feed mill this weekend. One of the free samples I got was a bird seed mix. It had black oil sunflower seeds, safflower seeds, whole raw peanuts, raisins, diced apples, and some other goodies. My goats **loved** it! I feed a little at each milking on top of the grain. I usually just feed a little handful of sunflower seeds, but this was a nice little treat. Remember when feeding treats like this, don't go overboard. The bacteria in the goat's rumen may have a hard time adjusting to an overload of strange feed and go on strike! I like the oil sunflower seeds because it gives the goat's coat a beautiful shine. The fiber also gives a boost to the fat content of the milk.



This month's Quiz:

What is the proper temperature for pasteurizing milk?

Have you gotten your winter's hay yet? Don't forget to get your copy of "The Haybuyer's Guide". It's available free from The Goat Source. Get it when you buy The Completely Digital Beginner's Pack. Look for it on my website.

