



Notes for Pet Goat Owners

Goats make wonderful, entertaining and affectionate pets. Due to the rise in popularity of miniature goats and goats as pets in general, we have put together a list of the most common veterinary tips for keeping a goat as a domestic pet.

Toxicity:

Goats are BROWSERS – as opposed to sheep and other small ruminants, goats would prefer to eat bushes and shrubs rather than grazing on grass. Sometimes this can cause some problems, particularly with Lantana. Lantana is toxic to goats and can cause neurological symptoms and liver failure. It is best to avoid housing goats in an area with access to lantana.

Worms:

Goats are highly susceptible to developing overwhelming worm burdens. The most important gut parasite of goats is the hookworm. This blood sucking parasite can quickly leave a goat anaemic and this can be deadly in some cases. If you suspect your goat may have worms please collect a fresh manure sample and drop it into the surgery for a faecal egg count. An egg count allows us to identify the burden worms are placing on your goats.

Common goat wormers include Panacur, Q-Drench and Oraljec Goat and sheep wormer. Goats should be wormed every 3 months and after a rainy period followed by warm weather.

Vaccinations:

Kids should be vaccinated with 5 in 1 at 4-6 weeks and again a month later and repeated bi-annually. This vaccination is for the prevention of enterotoxaemia (pulpy kidney disease), tetanus, black disease and malignant oedema (blackleg-like disease)



Urinary Blockage:

Goats are particularly prone to developing bladder stones (urinary calculi) and these small stones can cause a blockage in the urethra. This is a medical emergency and may prove fatal. Urinary blockage is most common in male goats, particularly castrated goats due to the lack of testosterone resulting in a narrow urethra.

The key to avoiding Urinary Calculi is feeding the animal a proper diet. Carefully read feed labels for proper calcium-to-phosphorus ratios (2 1/2:1). Some prepared goat and sheep feeds contain ammonium chloride in the formulation which helps prevent formation of calculi, but this is no guarantee that Urinary Calculi will be avoided. Most importantly, offer lots of free-choice forage/browse and good-quality grass hay and reduce the amount of concentrates (grain) being fed.

With the high mineral content of local water, we recommend goats be fed ammonium chloride daily.

For further information please visit these websites:

<https://www.petmd.com/blogs/thedailyvet/aobrien/2013/may/urinary-stones-in-goats-and-small-ruminants-30296>

<https://www.acvs.org/large-animal/urolithiasis-small-ruminants>