



**a Dairy Goat**  
for home milk  
production

# A Dairy Goat for Home Milk Production

A dairy goat or two can supply your family with good, wholesome milk for much less money than it takes to keep a cow. Goats cost less to start with and need less space, pasture, and feed.

A good doe (female goat) produces 2 quarts of milk or more a day for about 10 months of the year. A top milker may give 3 to 5 quarts a day for the same length of time.

Two goats may be better than one because they will supply milk for the entire year, and they will be company for each other.

You can get help in locating and managing a dairy goat through your county agricultural agent or State university.

## BUYING GOATS

For home milk production, it is not necessary to pay the extra cost of a purebred or registered dairy goat. A grade (not purebred) doe will cost from \$35 to \$50.

Members of State and local goat breeders' associations often have stock for sale. Or your public library may have goat periodicals that advertise goats for sale.

Be sure that any doe you buy is from a herd in which there is no brucellosis or tuberculosis. Find out when the herd was last tested for these diseases. Buy only from a reliable breeder. The quarters and pens in which the goat has been kept should be clean and the rest of the herd healthy.

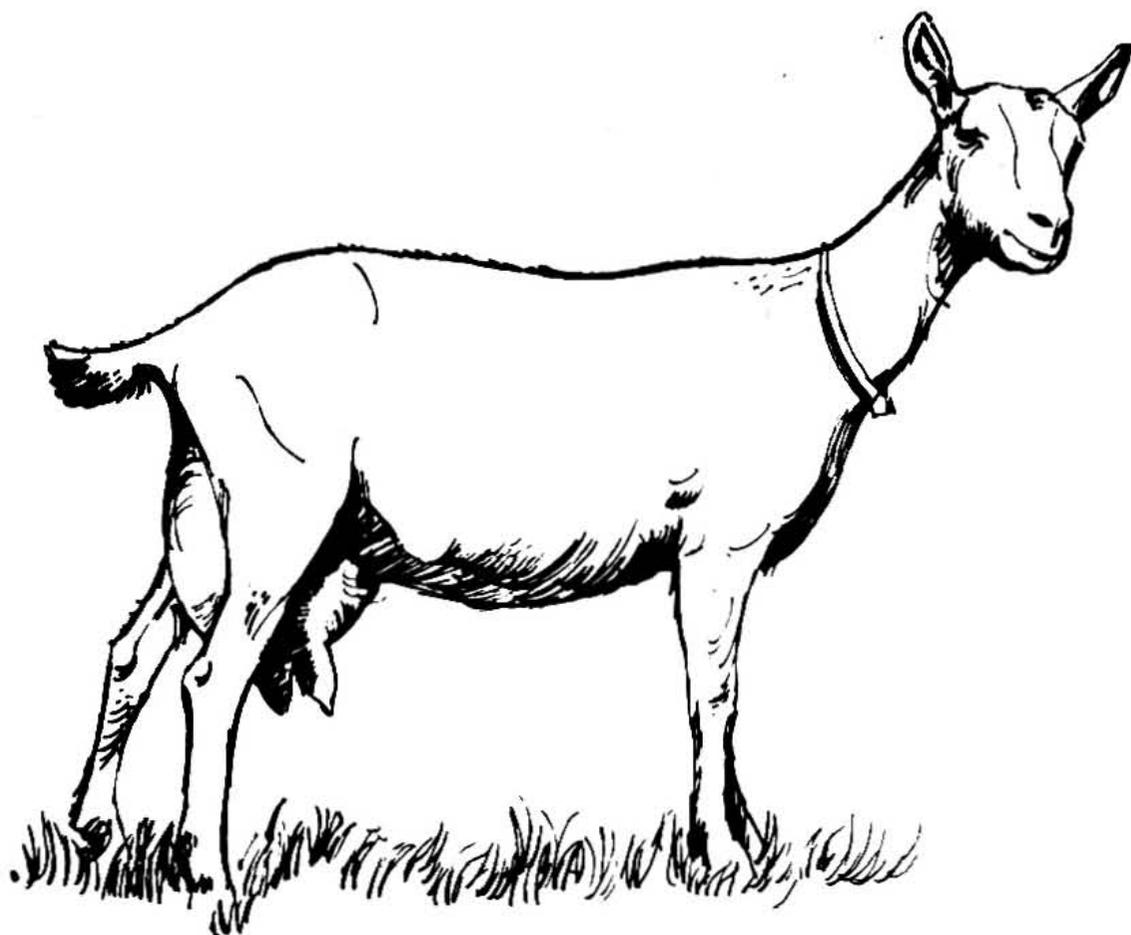


Figure 1.—The doe shown here has the alertness, size, healthy coat, and well-developed udder of a good dairy-type goat. She is lean and angular without fat. She stands erectly, which shows good condition of feet and legs.

Check carefully any doe you plan to buy. See figure 1. Milk her yourself. This is the only way to find out how she handles. If you are inexperienced in milking, get an experienced person to milk her for you.

Drink a glassful of her milk. Ask about her production.

Here are other points to check:

- Look at the doe's teeth. If they are badly worn, she is too old to be a good milker.

- Examine the coat and skin. A healthy, well-fed goat has a glossy coat and a skin free of sores and dandruff.

- Feel the udder after the doe has been milked. Make sure that udder and teats are sound and do not have hard places, warts, sores, or scars.

- Avoid a fat doe. She is probably a poor milk producer.

- Look at the doe's hoofs. Make her walk around the lot. A goat with untrimmed hoofs or foot rot will limp, and probably will not thrive.

- Feel under jaw; avoid a doe with lumps, knots, or growths.

- Check the ears for sores, scars, or scabs.

## PASTURE AND FEED

### Pasture

Goats are browsers by nature. They like coarse weeds and woodland, and can help clear land of brush and small trees. If you allow goats to roam the woods, be sure that there is no wild cherry, hemlock, azaleas, or species of the laurel family where they graze, because these plants are poisonous.

Does enjoy browsing, but they cannot be expected to produce milk without hay or pasture plus grain.

A goat needs about half an acre of pasture during a grazing season of 5 or 6 months.

## WILL IT PAY YOU?

It will pay you to keep a dairy goat if the cost of the milk your family needs is as much as 14 cents a day for the 275 to 300 days a year that a goat produces.

If you buy a dairy goat for..... \$50.00  
And sell her in 5 years for..... \$10.00

Cost for 5 years is..... \$40.00

Cost for 1 year is..... \$8.00

Interest on \$50 costs you..... \$2.50

Breeding charge is..... \$10.00

Doe eats about 450 pounds of oats (1½ pounds a day for 300 days)..... \$12.00

And about 500 pounds of alfalfa hay (2½ pounds a day for 200 days)..... \$10.00

And root crops..... \$5.50

Which adds up to..... \$48.00

But you sell a kid for..... \$10.00

So, keeping a goat for 1 year costs..... \$38.00

... or about 10 cents a day.

Goats thrive on any good mixed pasture. They do not like clover by itself, but relish a mixture of Ladino clover, bluegrass, orchard-grass, timothy, or trefoil. Sudan-grass or millet are good pasture grasses, especially in dry seasons.

Rye, barley, or wheat make temporary pasture for early spring and fall. Rape will furnish grazing 4 to 6 weeks after seeding.

### Feed

Goats do well on many kinds of feed. Their needs depend on the kind and amount of pasture available to them and on whether they are fresh, pregnant, or dry.

Root crops are good feed for does when available. They especially like beets, turnips, cabbages, and carrots. For information on root crops, see your county agent.

A fresh or pregnant doe on good pasture should be fed 1 to 1½ quarts of concentrate daily.

The concentrate is made by mixing—

Oats.....	2 bushels
Wheat bran.....	1 bushel (packed)
Soybean or linseed meal.....	½ bushel (6½ quarts)

This amount of concentrate costs about \$3.30. It will last a fresh doe on pasture about 90 days and a fresh doe not on pasture 50 to 60 days.

If you have oats, or oats and corn, you can feed these grains instead of the concentrate. Feed 2 quarts of oats or 1 quart of oats and ½ quart of corn daily. This ration costs about \$1.50 a month.

Fresh does not on pasture should have good-quality alfalfa or clover hay if possible. It contains needed proteins, vitamins, and minerals.

If alfalfa or clover hay is not available, you can feed early-cut mixed hay.

A fresh doe not on pasture should be fed a daily ration of—

Hay (alfalfa or mixed).....	2 to 3 pounds
Root crops.....	1½ pounds
Concentrate.....	1½ to 2 quarts

This ration costs about \$3 a month.

Oats or a combination of oats and corn can be fed instead of the concentrate. Feed 2 quarts of oats or 1 quart of oats and 1 quart of corn daily. Do not feed corn alone. This ration will cost about \$2.60 a month if oats are fed, and slightly more if corn and oats are fed together.

A pregnant doe not on pasture will do well on a daily ration of—

Hay (alfalfa or mixed).....	2 to 3 pounds
Root crops.....	1 pound
Concentrate.....	½ to 1 quart

This ration costs about \$2.20 a month.

If the same doe is fed oats, or oats and corn, the cost per month will be slightly less. Give her 1

to 1½ quarts of oats or ½ quart oats and ½ quart corn each day.

Dry does that are not pregnant do not need concentrate or grain. They can get along on hay and root crops.

Hay and grain are the main costs in feeding goats. If you have homegrown hay, or homegrown oats and corn, your cash outlay will be much less than if you have to buy all feed.

A doe that gets 6 months of good pasture needs about 500 pounds of hay during the rest of the year. She also should have about 450 pounds of grain a year. Hay and grain will cost \$1.75 to \$2.50 a month, the amount depending on the ration selected.

If no pasture is available, a doe will need about twice the amount of hay—or 1,000 pounds—and 20 percent more grain—or 540 pounds a year. In this case, her feed will cost \$2.25 to \$3.25 a month, the amount depending on the ration you select.

Keep iodized or block salt before your goat at all times. Occasionally mix a small quantity of fine salt with the grain mixture. If alfalfa is fed, there is usually no need for additional minerals. If mixed or grass hay is fed, ask your county agent about mineral requirements.

Supply plenty of clean, fresh water. Keep water container clean; rinse daily.

## HOUSING, TETHERING, AND FENCING

Goats do not need any special kind of housing. Any well-built barn or shed that is dry and free from drafts will do. A stall and manger can be built at low cost.

Straw, leaves, pine needles, sawdust, wood shavings, or peanut hulls make good bedding for

goats, and usually cost very little. Goats, however, can get along without bedding if none is available.

Keep the goat shelter clean. Remove manure and spread it on fields or garden.

Persons who keep a buck (male goat) must house him at least 50 feet away from the milking does because the male odor will be absorbed in the milk and give it an undesirable taste.

Do not let goats near surfaces that are painted with lead-based paints. They may eat the paint and be poisoned.

Goats are natural climbers. They will climb on low buildings and machinery unless they are tethered or enclosed in a tight fence.

To tether a goat, you need an iron stake with a light chain attached to it. Place the stake securely in the ground and fasten the other end of the chain to a leather strap around the goat's neck.

Tethering is a good practice if you do not have fences that will hold a goat and you do not want to put them up. You can milk the doe in the morning and then tether her in a pasture. Check her occasionally to make sure she does not get entangled in the chain. Move her several times a day. See that there is clean fresh water within her reach. In the evening, bring the doe in, milk and feed her, and put her in the shelter.

A satisfactory fence for goats can be made with 48- to 54-inch woven wire fencing. Fasten the gate securely. Goats can open most gates.

In addition, you may need to protect desirable young trees and shrubs; goats will destroy them.

## CARE AND MANAGEMENT

### *Milking*

Make sure that the entire milking area and all utensils used in milking are kept clean.

Before milking, wash the udder or wipe it thoroughly with a damp cloth. Each time you milk, discard the first few streams from each teat because the openings in the teats may be filled with foreign matter.

Because a doe is small, she is most conveniently milked from a stand. Such a stand is simply a bench—about chair height—with a stanchion and feedbox at the front, a seat for the milker on one side, and a railing along the other side. Slatted, inclined steps lead up at the rear.

If you are handy at carpentry, and have the needed lumber, you may want to build a milking stand (see fig. 2, p. 6).

Young does often object to being milked at first. The stanchion arrangement helps manage them. Eating grain in the box attached to the stanchion quiets them. They soon get used to being milked and will jump on the stand without assistance.

Dairy goats produce best on a regular schedule of feeding and milking. Heavy-producing does may need to be milked three times a day for a short time after freshening, but twice-a-day milking is usually enough.

Be gentle with does. Whenever possible, the same person should milk a doe at the same time and place every day.

### *Caring for the Milk*

As soon as the milk is drawn, strain and cool it. A small filter-type strainer should be used for straining the milk. A satisfactory strainer and filter disks can

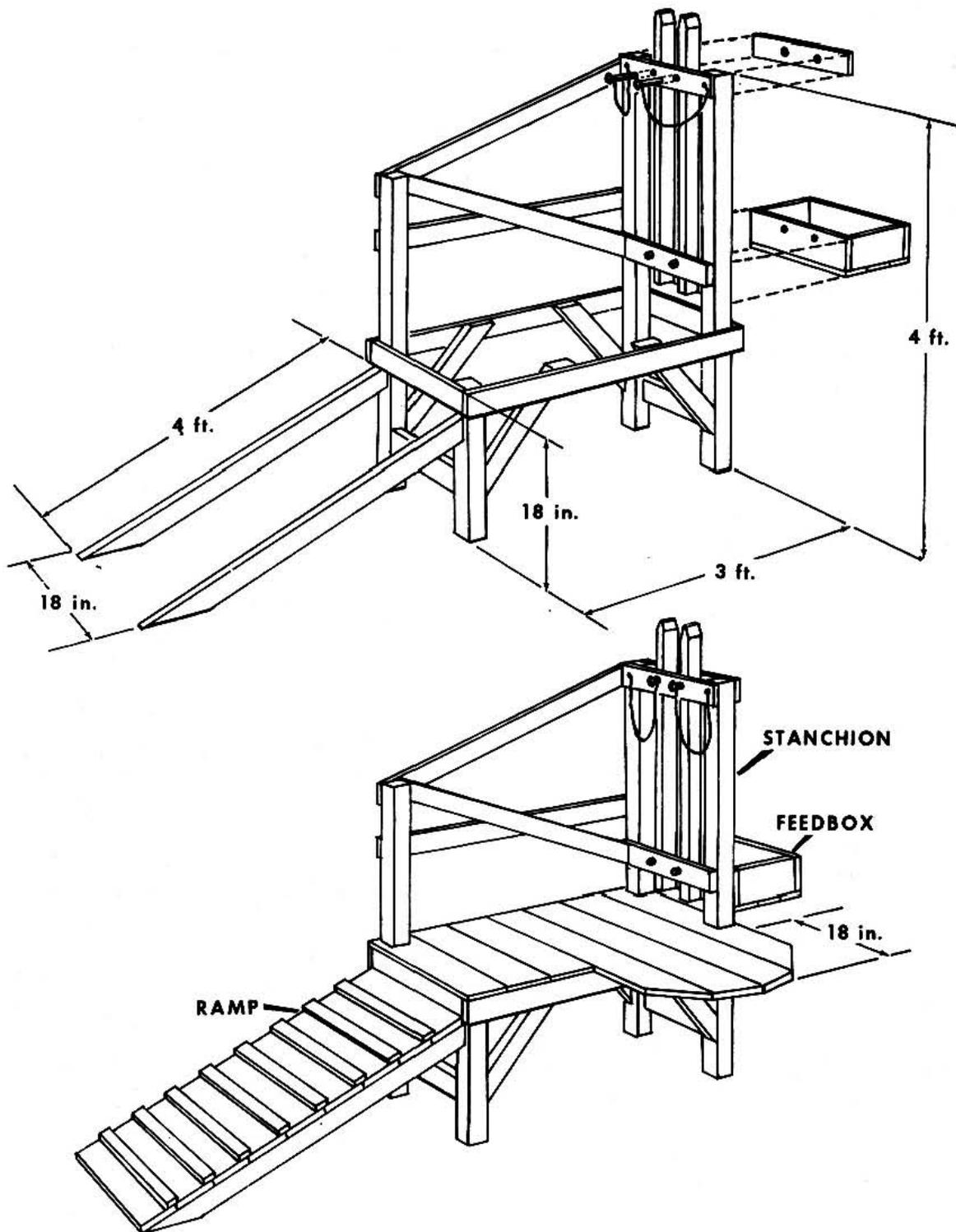


Figure 2.—Dimensions on these drawings can be used as a guide for building a milking stand. The upper drawing shows construction of framework without flooring boards. Bolts at top of stanchion pull out so that uprights can be spread apart to admit the doe's head. Then bolts are put back, and the uprights hold the doe in place. The lower drawing shows the finished stand. For platform, cross supports, feedbox, ramp, and ramp cleats, use 1-inch-thick boards. Use 2- by 4-inch lumber for leg braces and ramp frame. Use 4- by 4-inch lumber for leg frame.

be bought at a hardware or dairy supply store. Avoid a strainer that has a fine brass screen.

Cool the milk to a temperature of 40° F. as soon as possible. This can be done by placing the milk pail or can in a tank containing cold water. The milk will cool faster if the water is flowing through the tank. When cool, store milk in the refrigerator.

Wash out all milk pans and pails in cold water right after you use them. As soon as you can, wash them in hot water and a detergent, and scrub them with a brush. Rinse with hot water, then scald them with boiling water. Store clean utensils in a dust-free place.

Goat's milk is usually pure white. It keeps sweet as long as cow's milk. It can be used in the same way as cow's milk, and many persons prefer it.

The small fat globules and soft curd of goat's milk make it easy to digest. For this reason, babies, invalids, and others who cannot take cow's milk often thrive on goat's milk.

### ***Breeding and Reproduction***

Goats are in their prime when 4 to 6 years of age, but good individuals can often be kept a few years longer. Young does are usually bred when they weigh 85 to 90 pounds. Does should be in peak condition at the time they are bred.

Does come in heat regularly, about every 21 days, between September and January. After this time, they usually cannot be bred again until late in August. When a doe is in heat she is restless and constantly shakes her tail. Heat usually lasts 1 or 2 days.

In most areas, you will be able to get your doe bred. This saves you the expense of keeping a buck. It does not pay to keep a buck for one or two does.

Breed your doe to the best buck you can afford. A purebred buck is not necessary if a good grade or crossbred buck is available. Try to find a buck that has produced daughters with good milking records.

Artificial insemination is available in some parts of the country. The usual cost is \$10 or \$15 per doe—far less than it costs to feed and keep a buck.

### ***At Kidding Time***

Does give birth about 149 days (or 5 months) after they are bred. They usually give birth to two kids, but occasionally a doe may have three or four at a kidding.

A few days before you expect a doe to kid, put her in a small pen where she can be alone. See that she has plenty of clean, dry bedding and fresh water. You can easily set up a temporary pen by enclosing a small area with portable panels or hurdles.

A doe usually has no trouble at kidding time. However, if she strains strongly and doesn't deliver within an hour, call a person who has had experience with kidding or with lambing out sheep. If such a person is not available, call a veterinarian. Afterbirth should be expelled within an hour after kidding. Burn or bury it.

Make certain that the newborn kids do not chill. Dry them with a clean dry cloth and place them near the doe where she can lick them. After the doe cleans the kids, heat some water to lukewarm and give it to her.

When kids are 2 or 3 hours old, they are usually ready to nurse. If kids do not get up and nurse, milk some colostrum (first milk) from the doe and give it to the kids at once. Colostrum contains vitamins and antibodies that protect the kids from infection.

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This leaflet gives basic information about keeping a dairy goat for a home milk supply. It has been prepared especially for families in Appalachia, a region that includes all of West Virginia and parts of Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. The information, however, can be used almost anywhere in the United States.

Many of the suggestions in this leaflet are not suited to large dairy goat herds.

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Let the kids nurse 3 or 4 days and then train them to drink from a pan. Or you can start hand feeding from a nipples bottle and change to a pan later. Kids will start eating a little hay and grain at an early age.

If your family needs the milk and your feed supply is limited, you may want to sell kids soon after birth. Prices range from a few dollars to \$10 a head.

Buck kids generally are sold for meat when 2 to 4 months of age. The flesh of kids has a flavor similar to lamb. Doe kids from high-producing does are often worth keeping for milk production or for sale later as dairy animals.

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All kids should be disbudded (horn buds removed) at an early age.

All buck kids should be castrated when they are 2 to 10 days old. Do not keep buck kids. Their feed and care is a needless expense. Sell them when weaned, or feed them for early slaughter.

See your county agent for directions on how to disbud and castrate kids.

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## KEEPING GOATS HEALTHY

Goats are generally hardy and do not have as many diseases as some animals. Cleanliness, however, is important in preventing disease and parasites.

The major disorders of goats are: Mastitis, enterotoxemia, plant poisoning, and pneumonia.

If State or local health regulations require regular tests for brucellosis or tuberculosis, get information on testing from your county agent or a veterinarian.

Protect all goats from winter cold and dampness. Take special care in protecting young stock. Pneumonia often follows chilling and exposure and is probably the chief cause of death among kids during the winter months.

Unless properly managed, goats may have foot rot. Careful and regular trimming of hoofs and keeping pens dry help control foot rot. For information on treating foot rot, see your county agent.

Goats may also become infested with parasites. Your county agent may have suggestions on how to control them. Ask him for help.

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