

how to care for nigerian dwarf goats

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Introduction

When you first hear about **Nigerian Dwarf goats**, the image that often comes to mind is that of a tiny, adorable animal that can fit into the corner of a living room. In reality, these goats are full fledged farm animals that thrive when given the right care. They are prized for their friendly temperament, high milk yield relative to their size, and suitability for small scale or backyard farms. Whether you're a seasoned goat farmer or a curious hobbyist planning to welcome a Nigerian Dwarf into your homestead, this guide will walk you through every aspect of caring for these goats. From housing and nutrition to health management and breeding, you'll find practical, research backed advice that will help you keep your goats healthy, happy, and productive.

Understanding Nigerian Dwarf Goats

Origin and Characteristics

Originally bred in the United States, the Nigerian Dwarf goat was developed from the West African Dwarf goat. They were selected for their small stature, excellent milk production, and docile nature. Adult males typically weigh between 140–180 lb (63–82 kg) and stand 14–17 inches (36–43 cm) tall at the shoulder, while females are slightly smaller. Their compact bodies and short legs give them a “dwarf” appearance, but they are robust and adaptable.

Temperament

One of the most appealing traits of the Nigerian Dwarf is its calm, sociable disposition. They are intelligent, curious, and often enjoy interacting with humans, making them excellent pets for families with children. Their gentle nature also means they are relatively easy to handle and can be integrated into a mixed species herd without much stress.

Housing and Shelter

Space Requirements

While they are small, Nigerian Dwarf goats still need adequate space to move, exercise, and express natural behaviors. A minimum of 200 /sq /ft (18.6 /sq /m) of indoor space per goat is recommended. Outdoors, a fenced pasture of 1–2 acres (0.4–0.8 /ha) provides enough room for grazing and exploration.

Barn vs. Pasture

Goats are naturally curious and can become bored in confined spaces. A combination of a well ventilated barn and a secure pasture is ideal. The barn should be dry, well ventilated, and free of drafts. A pasture with a mix of grasses, legumes, and shade structures supports natural foraging habits and reduces stress.

Bedding and Ventilation

- **Bedding:** Use straw, hay, or wood shavings. Replace bedding at least once a week to keep the environment dry and reduce the risk of foot rot.
- **Ventilation:** Good airflow helps prevent respiratory infections. Avoid placing the barn directly in the windward side of a building.
- **Temperature:** Provide shade during hot weather and windbreaks in cold climates. Goats can tolerate temperatures as low as 20 °F (-6 °C) with proper bedding and shelter.

Feeding and Nutrition

Rations

Nigerian Dwarf goats are efficient converters of forage. A typical diet consists of:

1. Forage: 80–90% of their diet should be high quality hay or pasture. Choose alfalfa or clover for higher protein content.
2. Grain: 10–20% of the diet can be supplemented with grains such as corn, rolled oats, or commercial goat feed.
3. Fresh greens: Provide a daily portion of leafy greens like spinach, kale, or lettuce.

Water

Fresh, clean water must be available at all times. Goats can drink up to 5–10 gal (19–38 L) daily, depending on the weather and diet. Check water troughs for contamination and clean them weekly.

Supplements

While a balanced diet usually covers all nutrients, you might consider the following supplements:

- Mineral blocks: Ensure goats have access to a goat specific mineral block that contains calcium, phosphorus, and trace minerals.
- Vitamins: A vitamin A supplement can help during dry seasons when forage is low in nutrients.
- Probiotics: Useful during transition periods (e.g., weaning kids or changing diet).

Seasonal Adjustments

Adjust feed quantity and type according to season. In winter, increase hay consumption and consider adding a small amount of molasses or corn to boost energy intake. In summer, provide more water and shade, and reduce grain portions to avoid digestive upset.

Health Management

Common Diseases

Goats are susceptible to several conditions that can be prevented with good husbandry:

- Foot rot: Often caused by bacteria in damp bedding.
- Respiratory infections: Can result from drafts or poor ventilation.
- Parasitic infections: Internal worms (e.g., *Haemonchus contortus*) and external parasites (ticks, lice) are common.
- Milk related issues: Mastitis can occur if milking hygiene is inadequate.

Parasite Control

Implement a comprehensive parasite management plan that includes:

1. Regular fecal egg counts (FEC): Check parasite load every 3–4 months.
2. Strategic deworming: Use a broad spectrum anthelmintic based on FEC results.
3. Pasture rotation: Move goats to fresh pasture to break the parasite life cycle.
4. External parasite prevention: Apply topical treatments or use insect repellent plants.

Vaccinations

Vaccinate goats against:

- Clostridial diseases (e.g., tetanus, enterotoxemia)

- Parainfluenza and BVD (bovine viral diarrhea, if co-habiting with cattle)
- Caseous lymphadenitis (CLA) if in contact with other herds

Consult a veterinarian for a tailored vaccination schedule based on local disease prevalence.

Routine Check-ups

Perform weekly visual inspections for:

- Skin lesions, parasites, or wounds
- Signs of lameness or joint pain
- Milk production changes or udder health
- Body condition score (ideal BCS: 3–3.5 on a 5-point scale)

Reproduction and Breeding

Breeding Season

Goats are seasonal breeders, typically entering estrus in late summer to early fall. However, Nigerian Dwarf goats can breed year-round if provided with a consistent 12–14 /hour photoperiod and adequate nutrition.

Pregnancy Care

During gestation (about 150 days), increase protein and energy intake. Provide a high-quality hay and consider a prenatal supplement containing calcium and phosphorus to support fetal development.

Kids Management

Newborn kids should be kept in a dry, warm environment with access to a clean water source. Wean at 6–8 weeks, gradually introducing solid feed. Keep kids away from adult goats until they are fully weaned to avoid interference with milk production.

Grooming and Maintenance

Shedding

Nigerian Dwarf goats shed their winter coat in spring. Trim any long or tangled hair to prevent matting, especially around the ears and eyes.

Ear and Eye Care

Inspect ears for debris or infection and clean with a damp cloth. Check eyes for redness or discharge; treat with an appropriate eye drop if necessary.

Hoof Trimming

Trim hooves every 4–6 weeks to prevent overgrowth and lameness. Use a hoof trimmer suited for goat hooves and keep the cut clean to avoid infection.

Safety and Handling

Handling Techniques

Approach goats calmly and slowly. Use a lead or rope when moving them, and always keep a hand on the goat's body to prevent sudden movements. Teach children to stay still and avoid sudden noises.

Safety Equipment

Equip your barn with:

- Secure fencing (minimum 4 /ft high)
- Proper gates with latch mechanisms
- First aid kit for goats (including gauze, antiseptic, and a thermometer)

Training for Kids

Introduce kids to goats gradually. Let them observe from a distance before allowing supervised interactions. This builds trust and reduces the risk of accidental injury.

Environmental Considerations

Climate Adaptation

In hot climates, provide shade structures and ensure cool, dry bedding. In colder regions, use insulated bedding and consider a heat source such as a low temperature stove or electric heater set on a timer.

Shelter Orientation

Position the shelter to minimize wind exposure and to capture morning sun while providing shade in the afternoon. This natural temperature regulation reduces the need for artificial heating or cooling.

Common Myths and Misconceptions

Myth 1: They Need a Lot of Space

While goats do need room to move, Nigerian Dwarf goats are efficient and can thrive in smaller enclosures as long as they have access to pasture and adequate exercise.

Myth 2: They Are Not Good for Milk

Contrary to popular belief, these goats produce a high volume of rich, protein dense milk that is ideal for cheese and yogurt production.

Tips for New Goat Owners

Checklist

1. Secure a suitable shelter with proper ventilation.
2. Provide a balanced diet with fresh water.
3. Implement a parasite control program.
4. Vaccinate according to local guidelines.
5. Train yourself and family members in safe handling.
6. Schedule regular health checks.

Resources

Baca Juga (Artikel Terkait)

- [sims 3 trophy guide and roadmap](#)

URL: <http://1storleanscouts.com/sims-3-trophy-guide-and-roadmap.pdf>

- [the elf on the shelf story online](#)

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