Group Two: Dairy Does

In addition to the health concerns listed for non-producing adults, dairy does have additional health challenges relating to pregnancy, delivery and milk production. In order to produce milk does (female goats) must be bred to bucks (males), become pregnant and deliver kids (babies).

(1) Pre-Breeding: Unlike full sized goats, pygmy goats have an extended breeding season which means kids may be produced in winter or summer. The doe should be at least a year of age and in appropriate body condition when she is bred for the first time. Does that are too lean or too heavy may not be able to carry a normal pregnancy and the doe may have problems during delivery or producing milk. Annual vaccinations should be given 30 days before breeding.

(2) Breeding: Because bucks (male goats) cannot be kept in the city, the does will have to be transported to the buck to be bred.

(3) Pregnancy: The gestational period (duration of pregnancy) is approximately 5 months. Once the doe is confirmed pregnant, she should be protected from exposure to infectious agents. Non-pregnant healthy goats may be silent carriers of organisms such as bacteria, viruses, and parasites/protozoa that cause pregnant does to abort. Information on Chlamydosis, Listeria, Leptospira, Toxoplasmosis, Q fever and Brucella may be found at: [http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/U/UNP-0079/UNP-0079.pdf](http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/U/UNP-0079/UNP-0079.pdf)

All of these organisms may make people sick as well. Q fever in goats is considered a special kind of human health hazard because the organism survives in soil, can become aerosolized and be blown distances in the wind. This can unintentionally expose neighbors. ([CSU fact sheet 8.022](http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/U/UNP-0079/UNP-0079.pdf)).

The most practical way to protect your pregnant goat from diseases that healthy non-pregnant goats may carry without appearing sick, is to wear clean clothes, wash footwear, use gloves and wash hands if you handle other goats before you handle your own. Does may be vaccinated against some of these diseases, but vaccination is not protective against all causes of pregnancy loss in goats.

Nutrition during pregnancy will have to be adjusted appropriately. (p. 67, GRHB) Does may develop ketosis (pregnancy disease or pregnancy toxemia) and/or milk fever (parturient paresis or parturient hypocalcemia) if their diet is
not properly adjusted during pregnancy and early lactation. (p. 91, GRHB) CSU extension fact sheet # 1.630.

About six weeks prior to delivery, your veterinarian should check your doe and your facility in preparation for kidding (birth) as well as ensure all appropriate vaccinations (to optimize immune protection of the babies through colostrum) and deworming medications (to minimize exposure of kids to intestinal parasites) are given. The birthing area should have clean bedding and water in containers that are elevated off of the ground.

Abortion: Most of the diseases that cause abortions in goats also make people sick. Aborted tissues should be handled carefully with plastic gloves and the tissue double wrapped in plastic bags so as not to expose young children, pregnant women, elderly people and people with compromised immunity who are more susceptible to the organisms that cause abortions in goats. If a goat aborts it is important to call the veterinarian to examine the doe and to pursue diagnosis of the cause of the abortion by submitting samples to a diagnostic laboratory. http://www.cdc.gov/listeria/
http://www.cdc.gov/leptospirosis/index.html;
http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/toxoplasmosis/
http://www.cdc.gov/qfever/
http://www.cdc.gov/brucellosis/

(4) Birth: (p 37 GRHB) About 140 days after breeding the doe must be watched carefully for signs of delivery. The kid(s) will most likely emerge front feet first with nose resting on the front legs. If the doe is in distress and you are not experienced assisting the birth, your veterinarian should be called. The birth process is a wonderful act of nature to witness but infectious agents can be shed in the placenta and birth fluids so young children, elderly and the immune compromised should not be exposed to these tissues. It is normal for a doe to expel dark fluid from her birth canal for 2-3 weeks after giving birth.

The goat kids will need special attention for the first few weeks of life. Please see the discussion under Group Three: The Kids

(5) Lactation: You must decide if the kids will nurse the doe or if they will receive milk replacer so that you and your family can drink the goat’s milk. In either situation during lactation the doe should be observed for signs of mastitis (an
infection of the udder locally or as a sign of systemic disease): swelling, redness, pain, or abnormal discharge from the udder. (P.100, GRHB)

If you choose to milk the goat, proper technique, milking frequency, and milk handling procedures must be followed to ensure the health of the goat and the milk drinkers. This takes a lot of time and daily, consistent effort. (P.102, GRHB) Pasteurization for home milk consumption is strongly encouraged to ensure the milk does not carry organisms that can make milk drinkers very sick. Pasteurization is required if the milk is sold.

http://extension.oregonstate.edu/lane/sites/default/files/documents/sp_50-932home_pasteurizationofrawmilk_.pdf
http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/09372.html

The nutritional needs of the doe will increase while she is lactating (p. 67 GRHB). The duration of lactation and the amount of milk that she produces will vary with breed, nutrition, and management.

(7) Rebreeding: The doe should be dried off (allowed to stop making milk) prior to rebreeding. This is a time period when the doe regains her body condition and general health prior to the next reproductive cycle.