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Hot Weather Tips for Goat Enthusiasts

Some people think goats are low maintenance. But successful goat owners know it takes a lot of care to keep goats healthy and happy, especially in hot weather. Here are some tips to help you keep your goats cool and comfortable this summer:

- Position water containers in the shade. Algae grows rapidly in water that receives direct summer sun.
- Keep water troughs clean. Dirty water leads to illness.
- In extreme heat, or if you will be away for long periods, add ice blocks to your goats' water.
- Change drinking water several times a day in hot weather. Goats will not drink water contaminated with urine and manure (including that from dogs, cats and birds). Make sure water is also free of pesticides and other toxic substances.
- Water is essential for temperature control, waste excretion, electrolyte balance, digestion and more. Fresh, clean water should be available to goats at all times. This is especially important for pregnant and nursing does. Water is also critical to bucks and wethers for proper maintenance of their urinary tracts.
- Urinary calculi occurs when stones form in the urinary tract and block the urethra, interfering with urination. Genetics, disease and nutritional imbalances play a role, but inadequate water consumption can result in concentrated urine, which can increase the risk of urinary calculi, especially in hot weather. Increase water intake by offering free choice salt. This will help dilute the urine.
- Goats don't need to live in the lap of luxury, but they do need something more than a stuffy shed to get in out of the sun or rain. Make cross ventilation a priority, especially in the summer.
- Goats hate rain and mud. A dirt floor is okay, as long as it is kept clean and dry. A raised, slotted floor is even better.
- Goats sleep low to the ground, and breathing ammonia fumes is harmful. Ammonia builds up more quickly in the summer heat. Kneel down in your goat shed. If you can smell ammonia from eight inches above the floor, your shed is overdue for a thorough cleaning.
- A dirty shed with dirty bedding can lead to skin sores, mastitis, respiratory ailments, foot problems and more. These problems can escalate in the summer heat, so keep your goats' shelter immaculately clean.
- A bout of diarrhea can quickly lead to dehydration in the heat of summer. Keep cool, clean water available at all times. Persistent diarrhea in young kids can lead to death if left untreated. If symptoms persist, consult your veterinarian.
- Shear long-haired goats before summer the summer heat sets in.
- Remember, goats are playful and inquisitive. They're always looking for something to do. A raised platform in the pasture (preferably in shade) can be a great place for goats to play.
- Goats are especially vulnerable to stress when transported in hot weather. So keep the following in mind:
 - minimize transport time as much as possible.
 - provide for proper ventilation and keep the truck moving to prevent heat build up.
 - avoid transporting does in late gestation.
 - stop to check goats periodically in transit. Make sure they're not in distress.
 - build in plenty of time to rest, water and feed them along the way.

Have a great summer!