

Feeding Bucks to Prepare for the Breeding Season, and Beyond

From Sheep and Goat Medicine by D.G. Pugh, DVM with permission

Bucks should enter the breeding season in good body condition without excessive fat. They should be maintained at a pre-breeding body condition score of 3 to 4 because they may lose more than 10% of their body weight during breeding season. Condition scores should be assessed as a part of a breeding soundness evaluation about 2 months before breeding. It is usually beneficial to feed a concentrated energy-protein supplement to the males beginning about 4-6 weeks before the breeding season. Depending on the body condition and size of the male, 1 to 2 lbs. of concentrate usually suffices. A good quality supplement for grass based forage is 80% corn and 20% soybean meal. After the breeding season some concentrate may need to be fed to help the buck regain an adequate body condition. For the remainder of the year, adult males can be fed at a maintenance level. If grass forage is fed, animals should have free access to a mixture of 50% dicalcium phosphate 50% trace mineral salt. If legumes are a significant portion of the diet, a mixture of 50% trace mineral salt, 25% dicalcium phosphate, and 25% deflorinated rock phosphate can be offered. In both instances, these mineral salt mixtures should be the only source of salt offered to encourage adequate intake. The trace mineral component should be designed for the local soil type. Goats can usually consume trace mineral mixtures made for cattle. Because of the possibility of urolithiasis in males, the keeper should take steps to prevent stone formation by adding ammonium chloride or other urine acidifiers to the mineral mixture.