

Feeding Management for Kids

By Infovets

Your young goats feeding management is important critical to the success of your farm (which I rather call a business here), whether the production system is for live animals, meat or milk. In any case, your young goat kids are raised either as replacement stock or for sale. Which of these categories these kids fall into will determine how quickly you want them to gain weight and what feeding program they should be put on. To make correct appropriate feeding management decisions, you have to keep in mind the physiological changes that a young kid's goat's digestive system goes through as they grow. These changes affect the types and amounts of feed that young goats can eat, and thereby their nutritional requirements. They also affect how management techniques should be carried out specifically pre and postweaning management to minimize wastage and losses setbacks during these periods. At birth, the digestive system of the young goat is very similar to that of you the human. During these first stages of milk feeding, the abomasum and small intestines play an important role with respect to digestion and nutrition. In young goats, the suckling reflex triggers the oesophageal groove to close so that milk bypasses the rumen and flows directly in to the abomasum where clotting and some digestion occurs. Milk protein is rapidly digested in the small intestine. If the oesophageal groove does not close, for whatever reason, then milk goes into the rumen where it 'ferments', allowing digestive upsets to become problems.

When the young goats begin to eat solid food, these feeds may stay in the rumen and lead to development of the microbial population. The rumen-reticulum and the large intestine begin to increase more rapidly at the expense of the abomasum and small intestine. The change from pre-ruminant to ruminant is a gradual process, fibrous feed encourages rumen development and appear to speed up the development of the muscles of the rumen wall, which are important in rumen digestion and mixing of rumen contents. These changes in the digestive system have a large impact on the feeding methods used in raising young goats and should be kept in mind during all feeding management decisions. To be successful, your feeding program has to be well adapted to the nutritional characteristics of the young goat and what the intended end use of that goat. The milk-feeding period lasts from birth until the moment when the kid no longer consumes any milk. It could and can last for as little as three weeks, or as long as a few months more so if the kid is left with the doe. The first milk a young goat should receive is called the Colostrum and it serves three basic functions.

As a laxative to aid in the excretion of the muconium lining of the digestive tract, as nutrition providing an excellent energy source for the newborn and for energy reserves in the newborn are limited, and the high fat content of colostrum serves that purpose well. It also gives protection as it contains antibodies (immunoglobulins) to protect the newborn goat until its own immune system begins functioning about 3 weeks of age. It is always advisable to keep a reserve of frozen colostrum on hand to supplement those goats whose dams did not have sufficient quantities.

The key factor determined to affect growth rate is quality of the milk (fat content and dry matter content). Kids will grow just as well on good quality milk replacer as on goat milk. Feed efficiency appeared to be higher (less milk for the same weight gain) with goat milk especially during the first 30 days. If using milk replacer, the question often comes up whether to use goat, lamb, or calf milk replacer? What is important is the quality of the replacer. Kids perform best on replacer where the protein is 100% milk protein. The fat content of the replacer is basically used by the goat as an energy source. The type of fat does not appear to be important as the type of protein with respect to gains, but the amount of fat is (no higher than 30%). Milk fat (butterfat) is the preference (but is costly). In Kuching, we are UNfortunate to NOT have high quality goat milk replacers available commercially. Kids fed with nipple devises have fewer digestive problems and less bloating than those fed with a pail or pan. Cool milk also prevents them from greedily drinking large quantities of milk at a time, again reducing digestive problems. Kids fed cold milk do not diarrhea as quickly as those fed warm milk, for the same reasons. Free choice access to milk is preferred especially with respect to health and less digestive problems. Economics, however, often dictates just how much, or how little, milk replacer you can afford to feed. Satisfactory growth, and not necessarily maximum growth has to be emphasized. The amount of milk consumed by the young goat depends on the level of solids (concentration) of the milk. The more concentrated, the less amount consumed in terms of volume.

How young goats are fed after weaning will be determined by whether they are replacement doe kids or intended for market. Weight gain will vary according to the level of dry matter intake and particularly the level of energy intake. Generally, with market animals, maximum rate of gain is desirable. The quicker an animal reaches market weight, the lower the daily cost of feed, and hopefully the potential for a good return.