# Lactation Dry Period

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Dry Period

The doe should be bred to freshen once each year with a dry period of about two months. The dry period allows the mammary system time to repair and regenerate for the next lactation. The greater her production the more likely that her body has been depleted of the nutrients used in milk secretion and the longer the dry period required to replenish the losses and store adequate reserves for the next lactation. Does which are not given a normal dry period usually produce only 65 to 75% as much milk in the subsequent lactation as does given a dry period.

Grain consumption should be reduced or removed near the time that the dairy goat is turned dry. At the time of drying-off, substitute fair to good quality grass hay for alfalfa or other sources of legume hay. The dairy goat should be down to about three pounds of milk per day or less. Her milk flow will be reduced quicker if you change her routine at the same time you discontinue milking. Since mastitis is frequently started during the dry period, check her udder for possible problems such as mastitis. A certain amount of pressure is needed in the udder in order to stop milk secretion and flow. If the doe has had mastitis during her lactation, this is the best time to treat it with an appropriate antibiotic for treating dry cows or goats.

The dairy goat should be maintained in good condition during the dry period so she will freshen in a healthy state and have every opportunity to produce more milk in the next lactation. A good mineral mixture should be available. A purchased mineral may contain from 12 to 18% calcium, 6 to 8% phosphorus and 25 to 30% salt, with trace minerals and vitamins. The exact ratio of calcium to phosphorus needed is dependent on forage source since legumes are higher in calcium than grasses.

During the last 3 to 4 weeks of gestation, nutrition becomes more important to the doe. She should receive a better quality grass hay and about the same type of ration she will receive after kidding.

The doe should be managed during the dry period so that she is in good condition at the time of kidding. She should not be allowed to become fat. The key to success is to have the doe kid in a healthy condition and with a fairly good appetite. (Dairygoat.com)

The following information applies to cows, however, it is useful for the dairy goat breeder

While Dry Cow Treatment has been discussed and used for many years, it is still a critical part of most mastitis control programs.

The two main purposes of Dry Cow Treatment are:

To cure mastitis infections that are present at the time of drying off

To prevent new infections from occurring during the dry period

Unfortunately, not all infections present at drying off are cured by an effective Dry Cow Treatment. Cows which are less likely to respond to Dry Cow Treatment include:

Cows in which infection has been present for a long time are likely to have scar tissue present in the infected quarter, which interferes with the ability of the treatment to cure the infection. If individual cow cell counts are available, cows that had a high cell count last season, were treated with an effective Dry Cow Treatment at drying off and continue to have high cell counts in the following season are likely to be chronically infected. There is plenty of evidence available to show that the cure rates in these cows are much lower than treatment of more recently acquired infections.

Cows which are infected with Staph aureus are less likely to respond to Dry Cow Treatment than cows infected with Strep infections.

Older cows generally have lower cure rates than younger cows. Cows which have had three or more cases of clinical mastitis during the season are likely to have chronic damage to the quarter and are less likely to respond to Dry Cow Treatment.

All of this indicates that it is possible to select cows which are less likely to respond to Dry Cow Treatment. Consideration should be given to culling these cows - they are likely to contribute to high cell counts next season and can remain as a chronic source of infection for younger animals in the herd.

Culling can play an important role in mastitis control programs, but it must be recognised that is a relatively expensive option and effective treatment, or even better preventing infections from occurring, is obviously preferable.

For those cows that are to be retained in the herd next year, consideration needs to be given as to which cows to treat, and what Dry Cow Treatment should be used.

There are 3 basic drying-off treatment strategies which can be considered:

Treat the whole herd with antibiotic Dry Cow Treatment (Blanket strategy)

Treat only infected cows with antibiotic Dry Cow Treatment (Selective strategy)

Treat infected cows with antibiotic Dry Cow Treatment, and uninfected cows with teat sealant.

(mastitiscouncil)