How to Properly Hand Milk Goats

Producing High Quality Milk

The key to producing quality milk is a sanitary environment, properly cleaned and maintained milking supplies/equipment, following the proper milking procedure, and milking does with healthy udders!

Milking clean, dry, and properly stimulated teats allows the most efficient harvesting of milk and reduces the risk udder infections (mastitis).

Milking Environment

Housing conditions should be one of the first concerns in creating a clean environment for harvesting milk. When dairy goats lie down, their udders are in direct contact with the floor. It is crucial that this surface is clean, dry, and comfortable. The risk of mastitis increases greatly in dirty environments. Adequate bedding such as straw, sawdust, or sand bedding should be cleaned of manure daily and supplemented as needed. Resting areas should be situated in areas not prone to flooding or accumulating wetness. A clean, safe and stress-free environment is very important for efficient milking!

When a dairy animal is properly stimulated, the hormone oxytocin is released and causes the milk letdown. Fear or stress just prior to milking can interfere with oxytocin release and consequently, disrupt milk letdown. For this reason, animals should not be stressed entering the milking area, which should be a calm and quiet place. Good milkers are patient with animals and pay attention to details. Aggressive handling, long waiting periods or any changes in milking routine can interfere with milk letdown. Cooling systems that include soakers and fans should be used during extreme summer conditions. Keeping the animals comfortable will increase the overall milk yield and quality.

Milking Supplies

- Milk Stand Strip Cup
- Stainless steel bucket
- Cloth/Paper towels
- Pre/Post-Dipping Solution
- Stainless steel bucket, disposable filters and strainer
- Glass jars for milk storage
Proper Milking Procedures

The production of high quality milk depends on routinely following the proper milking procedures. The following steps are critical to reduce bacterial contamination, somatic cell counts, and to detect early stages of udder infections.

A Step by Step Guide

STEP 1.

Ideally, place the goat onto a milk stand and secure her in the stanchion with some grain. A stand will hold the doe’s head in the head gate, keeping her steady and in one place, and allows you to sit and milk the udder at a comfortable level.

STEP 2.

Goat udders should be shaved or clipped regularly to help keep them clean. If udders are visibly dirty, they should be cleaned with dry paper towels before milking. If possible, avoid using water to clean udders because it will travel down and onto the teat, potentially contaminating the teat opening. If it is necessary to wash the udder, use a disinfectant wash and dry the udder and teats thoroughly before continuing with the pre-milking protocol.

STEP 3.

The milked should wear disposable gloves. Gloves should be changed every time you start to milk a new doe.

STEP 4.

Pre-dip the teats in a 0.5% iodine teat dip solution. The teat should be clean and debris free. The dip solution should cover the whole teat. Allow at least 30 seconds of contact time.

STEP 5.

Strip each teat 2 to 3 times into a strip cup to collect any bacteria that may be present in the first streams of milk. Check for any abnormalities such as flakes, clots or watery appearance.

Forestripping can reduce bacteria, somatic cell counts and help to identify mastitis. If the milk shows any abnormality, discard it, remove the doe from the herd and treat her accordingly.
STEP 6.

Use a clean single use cloth or paper towel to wipe each teat using a downward twisting motion to dry and remove dirt and pre-dipping solution. This is the most important step in pre-milking hygiene as moisture is a growth requirement for bacteria.

STEP 7.

After the initial stimulus for milk let down, it takes a period of about 20-60 seconds for the response of oxytocin. To maximize milk letdown, whether milking by hand or machine, milking should start 60 to 90 seconds after pre-dip removal from teat.

Begin milking by squeezing with the thumb and first finger as high up as possible on the udder. Trap the milk with those fingers and then squeeze the remaining fingers while continuing to trap the milk. This will force the milk out of the teat. Be careful not to continue to milk to doe when the udder "feels empty" and milk stops coming out of the teats (i.e., overmilk).

STEP 8.

Use the same pre-dip solution. Cover the whole teat with the post-dip immediately after finish milking. The purpose of the post dip is to reduce the bacteria found in the milk film on the teat skin. This is also a fundamental aspect of the control of contagious mastitis. The post-dip solution will help reduce the risk of bacteria entering the teat opening until the teat sphincter closes.

STEP 9.

After finish milking, collect the milk through a filtered strainer into a clean glass jars. Rinse the bucket and strainer with water right away. Wash them with warm soapy water and rinse with boiling water or a solution of one part bleach to ten parts water, then air dry.

STEP 10.

Chill the milk to 38°F within an hour. Depending on the refrigeration temperature, raw milk will stay fresh for 12-14 days.