

Coastal Bend CATTLE GUARD

CURRENT LOCAL LIVESTOCK REPORTS AND NEWS

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Pet Talk: The ins and outs of dairy goat ownership

Goat milk producing can be rewarding, but there could be some hazards along the way

For the more adventurous pet owner, there are many advantages to owning goats, including companionship, land management by grazing and milk production.

While companionship and grazing come naturally to these animals, potential owners interested in collecting dairy from their goats need to take into consideration additional factors to encourage lactation and ensure that their goat's milk is safe for consumption.

Dr. Evelyn Mackay, a clinical assistant professor at the Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences, says that the production capacity of a dairy goat depends on their breed, management and nutrition.

The most common dairy goat breeds are Nigerian dwarf goats, Alpines, Saanens, Nubians, LaManchas and Toggenburgs. Nigerian dwarves are significantly smaller than the other breeds and may be preferred by hobby farmers who would like a smaller milk yield.

Since goats will only lactate after giving birth to a kid, the relationship between parent and offspring must also be considered. Depending on the goat and management conditions, dairy goats can produce milk for many months after giving birth.

"If owners are letting the kids nurse, owners will have a smaller milk yield than if they weaned the kids and only milked the goat," Mackay said. "Some full-sized, high-producing goats can produce over two gallons per day at some stages of lactation. A home dairy goat would likely produce less than a gallon per day, especially if she is nursing kids."



Regardless of the goat's desired milk yield, Mackay recommends that owners allow for a "dry period" between milking a goat and it giving birth again.

In order to impregnate a dairy goat, owners may keep their own male goats for breeding or can rent one via a stud service.

"It's easier to own a male goat, but they are smelly and sometimes poorly behaved," Mackay said. "Some people will borrow or lease a male if they only have a few females to breed. Artificial insemination can be

done but is expensive and is more labor- and time-intensive than in other species."

Typically, dairy goats should be milked, fed and cared for twice daily. After a goat is milked, it is important that owners ensure the goat milk is safe for consumption.

"Owners should absolutely pasteurize their milk," she said. "Raw milk is not safe for human consumption and can transmit dangerous diseases to people, such as Q Fever, brucellosis, listeriosis, salmonellosis and many others."

Although the benefits of owning a dairy goat are many, potential owners should be aware of the care requirements to keep their goat healthy and fit for milk production.

"They require just as much attention as other livestock, and paying close attention to udder health and overall health of dairy goats is very important," Mackay said. "They can get mastitis (inflammation or infection of the breast tissue) and other diseases related to pregnancy and lactation. Owners need to learn appropriate milking hygiene procedures and be prepared to seek veterinary attention for their dairy goats if they become ill."

Pet Talk is a service of the College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences, Texas A&M University. Stories can be found on the Pet Talk website. Suggestions for future topics may be directed to editor@cvm.tamu.edu.

By Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences Staff

Wildlife experts ask for public help in reporting bat mortality events

Last winter, White-nose Syndrome (WNS) was detected in bats in 18 counties in central Texas and the disease has continued to spread. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) is monitoring its progression through the state and is asking for the public's help to understand how WNS is affecting vulnerable bat populations.

"Last year, we received reports of bats dying or acting strange from around the state" said Nathan Fuller, a TPWD bat biologist. "Unfortunately, we expect the same thing to happen this winter and we are asking Texans to be on the lookout for distressed bats. Texas is a big state and we can monitor bats much more effectively with more eyes out there looking for bats."

WNS is a fungal disease that affects hibernating bats during the winter. As the name suggests, WNS presents as a white, fungal growth on the ears, nose and wings of hibernat-

ing bats. Researchers believe that the fungus that causes WNS, *Pseudogymnoascus destructans*, was inadvertently introduced to North America from Europe sometime in the mid-2000s.

Fuller says that winter is a dangerous time for bats as, after hibernating for a few months, bats with WNS start to run out of fat in January or February.

"Once this happens, bats often leave their roosts in search of food or as an attempt to escape the disease and unfortunately, the animals usually don't survive," said Fuller. "However, if we know where bats are in the most trouble, we can enact measures to protect the survivors and give them a chance to recover."

The pathogen that causes WNS is thought to be spread by bats through contact with other bats or contact with contaminated surfaces. The fungus grows optimally in

low temperatures and as a result, remains in bat hibernation sites long after they have left their roosts in the spring.

Since the first observation of WNS in upstate New York in 2006, the disease has spread throughout North America. Wildlife experts believe that millions of bats have succumbed to the disease. The actual number is unknown because of the difficulties associated with monitoring bat populations. The disease is not a risk to humans.

Bats are a critical part of the Texas ecosystem, with more than 30 species of bats calling the state home.

"Bats provide billions of dollars in pest control services by eating insects that damage crops," Fuller said. "Without bats, food costs could increase. They are also sensitive to environmental contaminants and other damage and so they can act as indicators of ecosystem health and function."

TPWD is asking the public to send reports of dead bats that are found to wns@tpwd.texas.gov. Those sending a report

are asked to include a general location and, if possible, a photograph. Biologists say that people should not handle live

bats or bat carcasses with bare hands.

Learn more about WNS on the TPWD YouTube Channel.

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Friday 9-5 Saturday 10-6

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BEE COUNTY 4-H

Training, webinars

• Bee County AgriLife will host auxin training for 2, 4-D choline formulations and Dicamba on March 2 from 9-11:30 a.m. at the Bee County Extension Office. Cost is \$10. Attendees will receive one CEU in Laws and Regs. Call 361-621-1552 for more information.

• Talking Ecology' is the topic of the quarterly Plant Party webinar set for Feb. 24. The free webinar will consist of several 15-minute presentations that will begin at 10 a.m. and conclude by 11:30 a.m. Participants must register at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PlantParty2> and will be sent the link to join the webinar the day before. Door prizes will be available for attendees.

"The Plant Party webinars are designed to be fun, with short presentations and door prizes for participants," said Megan Clayton, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension range specialist, Corpus Christi. Anyone from agriculture and natural resource professionals, landowners, Texas Master Naturalists, Texas Master Gardeners, 4-H youth

and the general public are invited to join in.

• The Southwest Beef Symposium on Feb. 23-25 will address ongoing drought. The symposium will be conducted as a Zoom series this year. Registration is free and now open. The program will run from 7-9 p.m. on Feb. 23-24 and from 4-5 p.m. on Feb. 25. Register at <https://nmbeef.nmsu.edu/>.

• The Brush Busters Cost Calculator, a new app for estimating the cost of herbicide plant treatment applications on brush, can now be downloaded free from both Apple and Google app sites. The app was designed and made available by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service range specialists as a means of calculating the cost of conducting individual plant treatments with foliar, stem/basal or cut-stump methods of herbicide application.

Check out and 'like' the Bee County Agriculture and Natural Resources Facebook page: www.facebook.com/bee-county-agriculture or visit the webpage at <http://bee.agrilife.org>.

This information was received from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service/ Bee County 4-H

NIXON
LIVESTOCK COMMISSION

Nixon Livestock Commission, Inc.
1924 E. State Hwy 87
Nixon, TX 78140
(830) 582-1561
February 8, 2021
Volume: 747
Cows: 103 Bulls: 15

STEERS	HEIFERS
200-300lbs.\$144-154-175	200-300lbs.\$125-135-155
300-400lbs.\$151-161-189	300-400lbs.\$128-138-170
400-500lbs.\$142-152-187	400-500lbs.\$120-130-146
500-600lbs.\$130-140-171	500-600lbs.\$106-116-153
600-700lbs.\$104-114-139	600-700lbs...\$91-101-127
700-800lbs.\$102-112-127	700-800lbs...\$91-101-108

Slaughter Cows .. \$24-68
Slaughter Bulls... \$75-91
Stocker Cows...\$600-1100
Pair\$875-1190

Sellers: 145 - **Buyers:** 50

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