Routine Management Practices in Dairy Goats
Routine management

Routine management is a key factor in the success of the dairy goat enterprise. There are many management areas that require knowledge and skills including: animal selection, milking procedure, milk equipment, animal care and housing, feeds and feeding, record keeping, among others. In dairy goat production, management and environment may account for about 80% of the differences in milk production. It is therefore imperative that the producer has the necessary capacity to perform routine activities and tasks required for good management.

Kidding/Parturition

The following management practices are essential;

a. Prior to kidding
   - Preparation of maternity pens which involves disinfection and provision of bedding material, water, and feeds.
   - Moving the doe to maternity pen 3-5 days before kidding
   - Close monitoring of the doe until it kids

b. During and after kidding
   - Monitor the kidding process (In case of any difficulty during kidding such as incorrect presentation of the kid consult a veterinarian).
   - Check whether the nostrils are clear
   - Dip the navel cord in a solution of 7% tincture of iodine
   - Allow the kid to suckle colostrum within 6 hours after birth. If the kid is weak and not standing within an hour after birth, assist it to suckle. Colostrum is rich in antibodies that provide immunity to the kid. If the doe is not producing enough milk for her kid, fostering or bottle feeding is recommended.

c. Kid rearing
   - Kid rearing from birth to weaning is a critical period requiring close monitoring for high survival rate.
   - Kid management programme aims at maintaining mortality at below 5% from birth to weaning
• The kids require clean warm and dry conditions during their first four weeks of life
• The Kidding housing or pen should protect kids from draught, heat, cold or conditions.
• All kids should be identified at birth for ease of keeping records,
• Kids should be allowed to browse/graze from 4 weeks onwards

Weaning
• Weaning is usually done at two to three months of age
• Gradual weaning has been found to be the least stressful weaning method for kids
• In a gradual weaning program, milk allowance is slowly reduced over a period of several days.
• Kids weaned before 70 days of age are much likely to experience weaning shock (reduced growth) than those weaned after.
• Weaned kids are prone to diseases such as worm infestation
• Avoid weaning kids who are sick. Sick or compromised kids may experience greater weaning shock hence reducing their growth and setting back their recovery.
• Weaned kids should be fed on highly nutritious feeds to avoid stress.

Disbudding
• This is a procedure performed on kid goats to remove young horns (buds).
• This procedure is performed on kids between the age of two to three weeks of age
• It is recommended that it is performed by a veterinary officer
• Kids are disbudded to prevent injury to other goats and to those who work with the goats.
• Goats with horns are more likely to get caught in fences and feeders.

**Deworming**

• Worm infestation contribute to poor growth rates, an unthrifty appearance, coughing, diarrhoea, and other digestive problems.

• Maintaining a dry, clean environment with a sound manure management plan reduces worm incidences

• The kids should be dewormed at the age of 3 months

• Deworming of flocks should be done at an interval of 2 to 3 months

• In areas where worm burden is high, deworming interval can be 1 month

• The dewormer should be given according to the weight of the goat

• The dewormers should be changed at a regular interval to reduce incidences of drug resistance

• Excess or low dosage and the repeating of same deworming drug may develop drug resistance

![Figure 2: Drenching a goat](image)
Castration
Castration of a buck is the process of removal or rendering useless the testicles to control indiscriminate breeding and inbreeding mainly physically using rubber rings, Burdizzo

Figure 3: Castration
Figure 4: Burdizzo

Hoof trimming
- Hoof trimming is the cutting off overgrown hoofs
- It should be done routinely every 2-3 months
- Overgrown or deformed hooves make normal walking difficult and painful for the dairy goat.
- Overgrown hooves become deformed and soft hence prone to infections like foot rot.
- Long overgrown hooves may also injure the udder when the goat is lying down
- Tools like trimming knives, hoof spincer (for clipping the dew claws) and hoof shears (for cutting overgrown edge of the claw) can be used
Milking of does

- The does should be milked twice per day (morning and evening).
- Milking of clean, dry, and properly stimulated teats is most efficient way of harvesting milk.
- Milking can either be by hand or machines.
- Proper milking procedure reduces the risk of udder infections (e.g., mastitis).
The following are important requirements for hygienic milk production:

- Well-constructed milking stand (milking parlour)
- Healthy doe
- Clean milking bucket (aluminium and stainless-steel materials are easy to clean)
- Mastitis testing (strip cup)
- Milking jelly
- Teat dip reagent
- Cotton clothes (one for each goat)
- Hot water on standby
- Protective clothing/apron
- Food grade soap

Standard milking procedures in dairy goats in a smallholder set-up:

- Put the doe in the milking stand or platform and restrain it
- Provide some dairy meal to calm the doe and keep it busy
- Wash your hands
- Wash the udder and teats with warm water and dry with a cotton cloth
- Milk by hand by squeezing the teats with the thumb and index finger
- The milking session per doe takes about 5 minutes on average
- After complete milking, the udder and teats are washed again with warm water and soap or special solutions. The is an option of dipping the teats in special antibacterial solutions after milking. Milking salve may also be applied on the teats after milking
- The amount of milk produced by each doe is thereafter measured and recorded
- It is advisable to collect all the milk in a clean container and cool it
- Thoroughly clean the buckets and other materials used and remember to keep the milking stand clean
Cleaning and manure disposal

- A goat house should be cleaned daily to remove droppings and leftovers.
- General cleaning and disinfection should be done fortnightly but may vary depending on weather condition.
- Likewise, removal of manure underneath the pen should be done fortnightly.
- Keeping goat house clean reduces incidences of worms and parasites infestation.
- Composting of dairy goat waste increases the value of the manure for soil fertility and reduces odours and fly problems.

Weighing

- Weight should be routinely taken at birth, weaning, nine months, one year (age at first mating) and at the point of sale. However, weighing can be done on a weekly basis for kids and monthly for mature goats.
- Weight assists in assessment of growth performance of dairy goats as well as determining the quantity of feed or medication to be administered.
- Goats are weighed using a spring balance, weighbridge or weighing tape.