

# NEW YORK STATE 4-H DAIRY GOAT PROJECT FACT SHEET #16

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## WHEN WILL MY GOAT KID

The most important item that tells you when a doe can be expected to kid is an accurate record of her breeding date. Without this, you are using pure guesswork, and could lose kids if a doe needs help during the birth process and you weren't there when needed. Most does are bred during September to December, although it is possible to breed does at other times of the year, especially with light-controlled housing. After the doe is bred, record the date, then watch her at the time she would be expected to return to heat. This is approximately 21 days later, but individual does may have longer or shorter cycles, so watch her closely for the next month or two after breeding. If you miss doing this, you might waste time and feed on a non-pregnant doe. A doe bred late in the natural breeding season might not cycle again, so it could be difficult to determine whether she is truly pregnant.

Pregnancy testing can be done several ways. One is by your veterinarian with ultrasound, which is a way to picture the insides of a doe without using x-rays, which could damage the unborn kid. Another method is by milk progesterone testing. Progesterone is one of the hormones of reproduction. A milk sample taken on the day of breeding and another 21 days later can be used to tell if the breeding was unsuccessful. Assuming your doe is safely pregnant, when can the kids be expected to arrive? A doe's pregnancy (gestation) lasts about 150 days. To save you calculating the expected kidding date the hard way, there are gestation tables available. One of these is shown on this Fact Sheet.

To use the Gestation Table: say your doe is bred on September 10. She will be due to kid (or "freshen") in February. To decide which day, you take the day of breeding (the 10th in this example) and subtract the number in the table (-3 for February). So her due date is February (10-3) = 7.

## GESTATION TABLE FOR DAIRY DOES

Doe Bred In	Will kid on Month	Number to take away from calendar breeding day	Take this number away instead in a leapyear
Jan	June	subtract 1	subtract 2
Feb	July	0	subtract 1
March	August	subtract 3	
April	Sept	subtract 3	
May	Oct	subtract 3	
June	Nov	subtract 3	
July	Dec	subtract 3	
August	Jan	subtract 3	
Sept	Feb	subtract 3	
Oct	March	subtract 1	subtract 2
Nov	April	subtract 1	subtract 2
Dec	May	subtract 1	subtract 2

Of course, most does will not kid precisely when you expect them to. You should be alert to signs of kidding before the doe's due date. Make sure that does close to kidding are housed in a way that makes regular close observation easy. You ought to have improved the doe's nutrition steadily throughout gestation. Keep her shed clean and freshly-bedded when she is due to kid. Don't isolate her totally from the rest of the herd, as this will distress her if she is not used to being alone. Watch for changes in the doe's behavior. Close to kidding, she will become restless and distracted. She may bleat frequently, and paw at the bedding. Her tailhead ligaments will sag and her udder may get shinny. The udder may fill with milk some days before. This is a highly variable sign of kidding, though. Some udders fill with milk a week before kidding, some not until the day of kidding. Don't milk the doe even a little unless she is in obvious pain from a swollen udder. You will lower the quality of the first milk (colostrum) which is essential for raising a healthy kid. The udder will drip on its own if it gets too full.

The doe is in the kidding process once mucus and membranes begin to show at the vulva (opening of the reproductive tract) or once she starts pushing. A kid should be born shortly after the placental sac breaks and the doe starts pushing in earnest.

Questions: Calculate the due dates for does bred on:

1) May 18, 2) September 2, 3) November 20, and 4) December 30 (answers below)

### **Suggested Activities**

- 1) Record breeding dates for your own does and calculate due dates.
- 2) Draw a plan of your barn, showing where does are housed and what you need to do to prepare pens for kidding.
- 3) View slides or a film showing a doe kidding.\*
- 4) Watch a friend's goat kid being sure to stay quiet and out of the way.\*
- 5) Take slides of a goat kidding and prepare your own presentation.

\* Activity is usually suitable for Cloverbuds with parental consent or company.

Answers: 1) Oct. 15; 2) Jan. 30; 3) April 19; 4) May 29