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Intermountain Meat Goat Production Calendar

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Introduction

Production of meat goats in western states has steadily increased in the last 10 years. This increased popularity has been enhanced by the ethnic market which has developed as Hispanic and other ethnic populations have grown within the region. Another factor that has contributed to the popularity of goat production is their ability to be used as tools for environmentally friendly weed control.

Since meat goat production is still relatively new to the Intermountain region, many of the management tools developed in the southern states do not necessarily translate well due to climatic and husbandry differences for the arid and mountainous conditions that exist in the West.

Development Assumptions

This management calendar was adapted from a publication of the University of Arkansas (Jones 2014) in order to match better the western climatic and production conditions. It has been developed for herds which are managed on range/pasture conditions throughout the year. Some of the recommendations may not be applicable during winter months if it is applied for herds that are grazed only during spring, summer and fall and are fed in a drylot during winter.



Figure 1. Goats grazing Leafy Spurge (*Euphorbia esula*) as a method of controlling the weed's spread.

The calendar also assumes that the herd will be kidded beginning in early-March and continuing through mid-April. It can be adapted by moving those tasks related to parturition forward or back to the month that applies. The important part is to remember that the time space between those tasks should be maintained.

JANUARY

- Evaluate pasture/range forage and continue herd rotation to new areas in order to ensure adequate feed resources.
- Monitor body condition of does and supplement as needed.
- Depending on dietary selenium, the does may need an injection of Bo-Se before kidding. Ask your veterinarian to be sure. Follow label instructions for dosage and injection instructions or per veterinary prescription.



Figure 2. Supply cabinet used to house kidding and other husbandry supplies.

- Prepare for kidding season by taking inventory of kidding supplies and obtaining those items that are in short supply. Kidding supplies should be kept together in a place that is readily accessible when needed. The kidding kit can include the following:
 1. Two rolls of good paper towels,
 2. Absorbent industrial/shop towels to help dry off kids,
 3. Large garbage bags to dispose of soiled paper towels, afterbirth, any other trash,
 4. Flashlight, in case assistance is needed at night,
 5. Antiseptic lube,
 6. Surgical scrub such as a Betadine solution,
 7. Scissors to cut umbilical cord, if necessary,
 8. Iodine 7% Tincture to dip the navel,
 9. Large syringe to feed kids if they are too weak to nurse on their own,
 10. Pail for warm water.

- Sort open does from pregnant does.
- Evaluate does and sell any that are unsound or of poor quality. Use the proceeds from these sales to purchase replacement does.
- Vaccinate does for Enterotoxemia types C & D (*Clostridium perfringens* types C & D) 30-45 days prior to the beginning of kidding.
- Breed open does for late-Spring/early-Summer kidding. Record breeding dates to determine approximate kidding dates.
- Trim hooves of pregnant does.
- Trim hair on udders and beards on any does that have beards. This makes it more sanitary during kidding and prevents icicles from forming on a doe's chin.
- Maintain clean feed bunks if the does are in a dry lot.

FEBRUARY

- Evaluate pasture/range forage and continue herd rotation to new areas in order to ensure adequate feed resources.
- Begin feeding pregnant does extra supplemental feed.
- Check does at least twice daily to detect any potential problems early before they turn into serious conditions.
- Trim hooves as needed. Watch for foot rot/lameness and treat if necessary.
- Check for internal (worms) and external parasites (lice).
- Prepare kidding area for the onset of kidding.

- Maintain clean feed bunks.

MARCH

- Evaluate pasture/range forage and continue herd rotation to new areas in order to ensure adequate feed resources.
- Begin kidding following established kidding protocols.
- Feed supplement to nursing does.
- Tag kids as they are removed from the kidding pens.
- Keep buck kids born from only superior does. Castrate all other buck kids.
- Collect fecal samples for evaluation to determine internal parasite loads.
A great fact sheet on how to do fecal egg counts can be found at:
<http://www.uaex.edu/publications/pdf/FSA-9608.pdf>
- Vaccinate kids at 3 weeks of age for Enterotoxemia types C & D (*Clostridium perfringens* types C & D).

APRIL

- Continue kidding following established kidding protocols.
- Evaluate pasture/range forage and continue herd rotation to new areas in order to ensure adequate feed resources.
- Ask yourself – Do my animals look as good as I would like? Do management practices need to be changed?
- Continually monitor body condition of nursing does and supplement as needed.
- Vaccinate kids at 3 weeks of age for Enterotoxemia types C & D (*Clostridium perfringens* types C & D). Give kids vaccinated in March a booster injection at 21 days post-vaccination. Also, vaccinate pregnant does for Enterotoxemia types C & D (*Clostridium perfringens* types C & D) 30-45 days prior to the beginning of kidding.
- Spray herd with Permethrin insecticide to repel flies.

MAY

- Evaluate pasture/range forage and continue herd rotation to new areas in order to ensure adequate feed resources.
- Continually monitor body condition of nursing does and supplement as needed.
- Give kids vaccinated in April a booster injection at 21 days post-vaccination.
- Trim hooves on entire herd as needed, including older kids.
- Weaning should be done by weight, rather than age. Kids that weigh between 25 and 35 pounds can be weaned if they are eating well. Weaned kids can be placed with the early-Summer kidding does and managed in their grazing herd until they are moved to the kidding area.
- Trim hooves of pregnant does.
- Trim hair on udders.
- Monitor body condition of pregnant does and supplement as needed.
- Depending on dietary selenium, the does may need an injection of Bo-Se before kidding. Follow label instructions for dosage and injection instructions or per veterinary prescription.
- Prepare for summer kidding season by taking inventory of kidding supplies and obtaining those supplies that are in short supply.

JUNE

- Begin kidding January-bred does following established kidding protocols.
- Feed supplement to nursing does.
- Tag kids as they are removed from the kidding pens.
- Vaccinate kids at 3 weeks of age for Enterotoxemia types C & D (*Clostridium perfringens* types C & D).
- Evaluate pasture/range forage and continue herd rotation to new areas in order to ensure adequate feed resources. When moving the herd to new feeding areas, try to do it in the early morning to reduce heat stress on the herd, especially kids.
- Continually monitor body condition of nursing does and supplement as needed.
- Begin looking for buck(s) to perform fall breeding. Look for bucks with good confirmation, structural correctness, muscling and a high weight per day of age.
- Collect fecal samples to determine internal parasite load. Treat with anthelmintic (dewormer), if needed. Consult your veterinarian to develop an internal parasite control plan.
- Continue fly control program, as needed.
- Constantly monitor water troughs to ensure all herds have adequate water. This is especially critical during the hot, dry summer months.

JULY

- Evaluate pasture/range forage and continue herd rotation to new areas in order to ensure adequate feed resources. When moving the herd to new feeding areas, try to do it in the early morning to reduce heat stress on the herd, especially kids.
- Continually monitor body condition of nursing does and supplement as needed.
- Continue to wean kids as they reach 25 to 35 pounds and are eating well. Move them into a herd with those kids weaned earlier.
- Keep buck kids born from only superior does. Castrate all other buck kids.
- Begin preparing for the breeding season. Pull out your production records and decide which does will be bred early and which will be bred later.
- Constantly monitor water troughs to ensure all herds have adequate water. This is especially critical during the hot, dry summer months.

AUGUST

- Evaluate pasture/range forage and continue herd rotation to new areas in order to ensure adequate feed resources. When moving the herd to new feeding areas, try to do it in the early morning to reduce heat stress on the herd, especially kids.
- Continually monitor body condition of nursing does and supplement as needed.
- Continue to wean kids as they reach 25 to 35 pounds and are eating well. Move them into a herd with those kids weaned earlier.
- Combine March- and June-kidding doe herds if the younger kids are growing well.
- Constantly monitor water troughs to ensure all herds have adequate water. This is especially critical during the hot, dry summer months.

SEPTEMBER

- Evaluate pasture/range forage and continue herd rotation to new areas in order to ensure adequate feed resources. Begin spreading forage seed mix on areas where the herd is grazing so they can help cover the seed with soil.
- Flush (flushing refers to extra supplementation to improve body condition before breeding season) the does and bucks beginning the third week of the month using fresh pasture and ½ pound of corn for 2 to 3 weeks before and after the breeding season.
- Be sure arrangements for the buck(s) that will be used for breeding have been confirmed.
- Begin watching for signs of estrus in the does. When a doe begins exhibiting signs of estrus, mark that doe's tag number on the calendar. Does should cycle every 18-21 days. Signs of estrus are as follows:
 - Doe becomes very vocal, as though she is in pain.
 - Constant tail wagging from side to side.
 - Slightly swollen and reddened vulva.
 - Tail area may appear wet and dirty due to vaginal discharge.
 - Other signs may be slight loss in appetite and an increased frequency of urination.
 - If the doe is mature and the buck is near, the doe may pace back and forth along the fence looking for a way to get to the buck.
- May mount other does or allow herself to be mounted by other does (Luginbuhl 1998).
- Deworm all does and bucks if needed.
- Maintain fences in the breeding area to prevent breeding "accidents".
- Synchronize does in preparation for breeding.

OCTOBER

- Evaluate pasture/range forage and continue herd rotation to new areas in order to ensure adequate feed resources. Begin spreading forage seed mix on areas where the herd is grazing so they can help cover the seed with soil.
- Turn buck(s) out with does at a ratio of 1:30 (buck:does). Does bred this month will kid in March.
- Continue flushing does.
- Keep special buck-handling coveralls and gloves for those times when you must handle the bucks. This will reduce the amount of buck odor that adheres to your clothes.
- Perform maintenance on winter shelters/pens to ensure adequate housing during storms.
- Spend time observing the bucks to make sure they aren't losing weight from breeding activities. Increase their supplemental feed and check for parasites, if necessary.

NOVEMBER

- Evaluate pasture/range forage and continue herd rotation to new areas in order to ensure adequate feed resources. Begin spreading forage seed mix on areas where the herd is grazing so they can help cover the seed with soil.
- Ensure water remains open and free from ice.
- Determine body condition of the doe herd and make plans for winter supplements.
- Does bred this month will kid in April.
- Arrange for ultrasound pregnancy testing of the does. Does must be 40+ days past breeding before results are accurate.
- Does should be in good condition, but not fat. Plenty of exercise is critical to guard against pregnancy toxemia.
- Breed any large doelings that weigh more than 75 pounds.

- Collect fecal samples to monitor for internal parasites. If the parasite loads are heavy, treat with an anthelmintic (dewormer) after the first hard freeze.
- Remove bucks from the doe herd after they have been in for 45 days. Feed the bucks to allow them to regain the body condition they lost during the breeding season.
- Maintain clean feed bunks

DECEMBER

- Evaluate pasture/range forage and continue herd rotation to new areas in order to ensure adequate feed resources. Begin spreading forage seed mix on areas where the herd is grazing so they can help cover the seed with soil.
- Ensure water remains open and free from ice.
- Supplement does as needed to maintain doe body condition.
- Maintain clean feed bunks.
- Check all equipment and accomplish maintenance as needed.

Conclusion

Following the recommended and industry-accepted husbandry techniques found in this calendar will create a production environment that will be most likely lead to good health for your herd and prosperity for your pocketbook.

References

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