

## Housing Facilities

Goats do not need extensive housing; however, some sort of facility is necessary and very important for their welfare. Several criteria need to be met:

1. Provide for the health and well-being of the animal.
2. Provide a safe, desirable, and efficient working environment for laborers.
3. Meet environmental and safety codes.
4. Be economical.

### Types of Housing

There are two types of housing that are commonly used for goats: *cold housing* and *warm housing*.

Cold housing is a building that is uninsulated, that has natural ventilation, and that has an inside temperature very similar to the outside temperature. It provides a draft-free, dry area in the winter, and wind ventilation and shade in the summer. It is usually less expensive to build and to keep this type of building cool in the summer. Some problems with cold housing in the winter are frozen waterers and the possibility of increased feed intake needed to maintain the animals' body temperature.

Warm housing is an environmentally controlled building. These buildings are usually heavily insulated with some sort of mechanical ventilation system that is thermostat controlled. Temperatures are kept well above freezing, regardless of outside temperatures. There tend to be more health problems in these types of facilities due to a higher humidity.

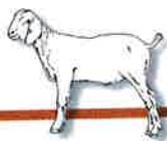
The type of housing that is chosen depends on the climate and your region of the United States. Regardless of the type of housing, the ventilation system must function to provide fresh air, remove excess heat during hot weather, remove moisture from the building, and remove odors and gases from the animal waste. If the building has a poor ventilation system, health problems, such as pneumonia, can arise due to irritation of the lungs.

Most housing for goats is the cold housing type, consisting of a simple three-sided shed. Goats are most comfortable when temperatures are between 55 and 70 degrees F and can easily handle colder temperatures without any difficulty. Problems arise with intake, milk production, and growth when the temperatures get over 80 degrees F, so the main housing problem arises on how to keep animals cool in the summer, not warm in the winter.

### Methods of Housing

The two most common methods of housing goats, whether they are in dairy, meat, or fiber operations, are loose housing and stall housing. The method of housing used often depends on available space and existing buildings.

Loose housing is where animals are in a shed or pen. Feeding systems are usually in a shelter, and there is access to an outside exercise lot. A generous recommendation is to allow 15 to 20 square feet per animal inside and another 20 to 25 square feet per animal outside. Ten to 12 square feet per



animal inside, in addition to an outside exercise area, is a minimum. Using a manure pack (allowing bedding, feces, and urine to cumulate over time) is typical for loose housing and eliminates the need to remove manure on a daily basis. Advantages of loose housing are that it is less costly and less labor intensive.

Loose housing for dairy goats often includes freestalls. Depending on the breed of your goats, freestalls should be 18 to 20 inches wide and 36 inches in length. Rear curb height should be 8 inches. Bedding should be 3 to 4 inches higher in the front of the stall than at the rear. Alley width should be wide enough to get a scraper through for removal of manure. Some disadvantages of these systems are that more bedding is required, the milking parlor is required to be completely separate, and some boss goats may cause injury to other animals.

Stall housing is where animals are confined to their own box stalls or tie stalls, with

limited or no access to an outside area. Box stalls should provide each animal with 20 to 25 square feet, and tie stalls should be 18 to 20 inches wide and 40 inches in length. Rear curb height should be 8 inches and the feeder should be 8 to 10 inches high. The stall should be designed to keep urine and feces to the rear or out of the stall. Advantages of this system are less bedding is used and animals usually receive more individualized care. A big disadvantage is that it is much more labor intensive. Keep in mind that for the best ventilation, the main opening of the barn should be to the south or southeast.

**Enrichment.** Goats are active, social animals that do best in stimulating environments. You can ensure their well-being by enriching their environment. Some examples of enrichment include climbing structures, trees and bushes, and human interaction.

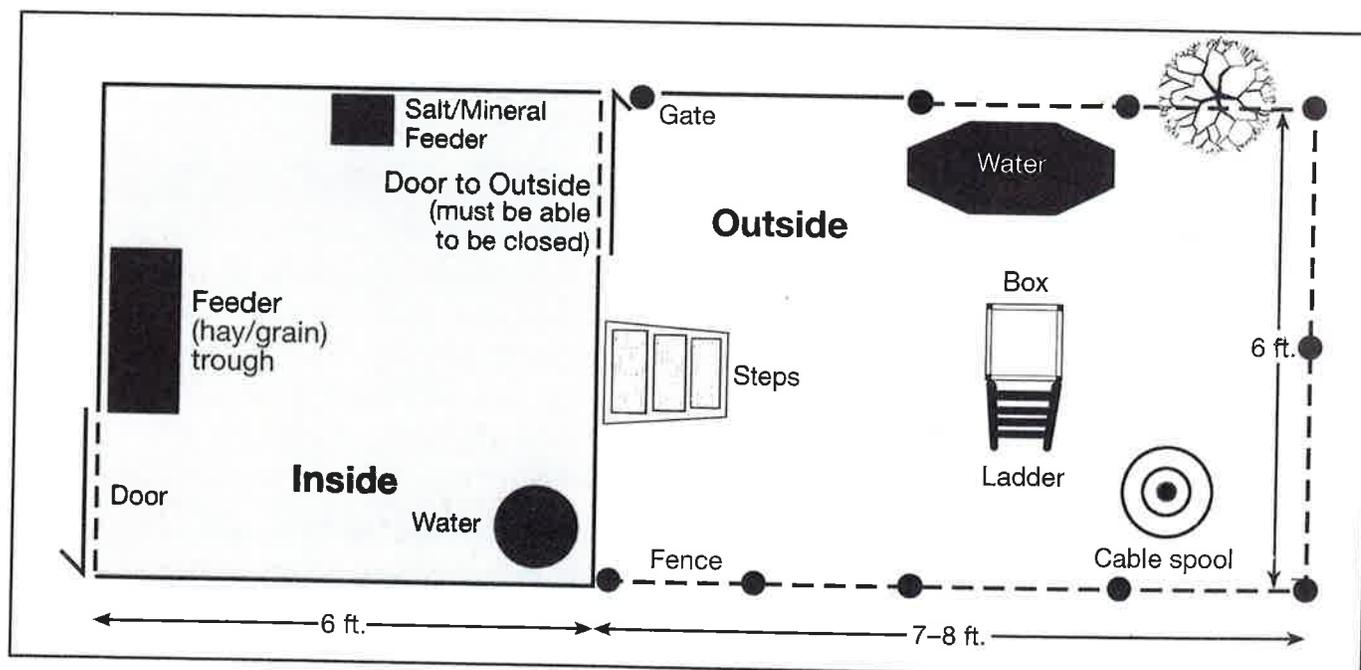
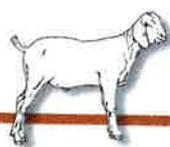


Figure 10.1. Example pen for two goats.

Ohio State University Extension.



## Housing Newborn Kids and Young Stock

How young stock is housed largely depends on the kind of operation you have. However, all kids, regardless of the system, need to be in an area that is clean, dry, and free from drafts. In extremely cold weather, they also may need heat lamps to help them maintain body temperature.

In dairy systems, kids are often removed from the doe either immediately or within the first three days of birth after adequate colostrum intake. Housing for kids should be a separate pen in the barn, with or without access to an outside yard. They should also be grouped by age so that older kids are not restricting access of younger, smaller kids to feed bunks and water. As kids grow older, more space and an exercise system are necessary.

In meat and fiber systems, it is important to monitor how kids are nursing to be sure that they are nursing well and receiving enough milk. The majority of kids in meat and fiber systems are weaned when they 60 to 90 days old. At this time, if there are intact males housed with females, they should be separated so that early maturing animals are not bred too early.

## Housing Bucks

Bucks should be housed separately. They require minimum housing; enough shelter to keep them clean and dry is sufficient. Bucks can be housed together and require approximately 30 to 40 square feet of pen space and 100 square feet of exercise area per animal. In dairy systems, bucks should be housed downwind from the milking herd because of the off-flavor their odor can give to the milk.

## Sick Pens

Sick pens or hospital pens for goats should be approximately 16 to 20 square feet in a clean and dry area of the shelter or barn, away from other animals. If a goat is sick with an infectious disease, separation from the remaining herd is very important to avoid infecting other animals. The hospital pen should contain a headlock or stanchion so that the animal can be easily restrained and treated without injury to themselves or the person doing the treating. Due to space limitations, sick pens do not need to be available all of the time and can serve as storage areas when not in use.

## Maternity Pens

An important aspect of kidding is a clean birthing area. This can be a pen in the barn or on pasture in good weather. A pen should be 4 x 6 or 5 x 5 feet, with enough room for the doe to lie down and give birth to twins without injuring the first kid that is born. Does should stay with kids in a pen for the first three to five days after birth, until the kids are firmly established on the doe. If kidding outside, make sure that the does are in an area where they can be checked frequently and where they have access to shelter in case of bad weather.

## Fencing

Fencing for goats has two goals: keeping goats in and keeping predators out. Keeping goats in is probably the most difficult part. Goats love to climb and are excellent jumpers. When housing bucks, make sure fencing is secure so that they cannot get into the does' enclosure. Fencing needs to be sturdy enough for the goats to stand on the



fence and tall enough, about 48 inches, for them not to jump over.

Electric fence works well for goats once they have been trained to it. The lowest strand of an electric fence needs to be no more than 6 to 8 inches off of the ground; otherwise, the goats will crawl under. Hardware or stock panels are also another good choice and are sturdy enough to withstand goats standing on them with their front feet. A combination

of electric fence and stock panels also works well if goats are escaping from their enclosure.

Rail fencing doesn't work well for goats unless the rails are placed very close to each other. Typical rail fence does not work, as the goats, especially kids and young stock, slip through the rails. Woven wire fencing is not a good choice as it starts to sag quickly when goats stand on it.

