

Feeding the Market Goat

Feeding a market goat is often similar to feeding breeding goats. They need the same minerals and vitamins as breeding animals, but will differ in the amounts of protein and energy.



Market goats typically receive a higher energy ration for additional body condition.

Market goat rations will provide high levels of both protein and energy to keep them animal growing while adding body condition.

Ideal market goat weights will vary by the time of year. They are often marketed during Christian, Muslim, or other ethnic holidays. Goats can be

finished out either in a feedlot or on pasture. Keep in mind that pasture feeding will allow for slower growth as compared to a feedlot.

Feeds for goats can be divided into several different categories: forages, grains, protein supplements, minerals and water. Depending on what levels of each category that you feed, you will find that goats will gain about .25 to .5 a pound each day. You can adjust your rations to have your goats reach a particular market weight in a specified amount of time.

[Forages](#)

Goats will readily eat a variety of forages. These include pasture, hay, haylage, and brush. Any species of forage is acceptable for goats, although you will want to be careful of feeding a lot of alfalfa to wethers and billies because the higher calcium levels can lead to urinary calculi or kidney stones. Goats are very useful in many operations for cleaning up unwanted brushy areas. Most brushy areas will only be able to survive about 2 years with intensive defoliation. Forages are an important part of a ruminant's ration because the high fiber is necessary to keep the digestive system healthy.

[Grains](#)

Grains provide the energy portion of a ration for goats. A variety of grains are available, with corn, oats, wheat and barley being the most widely used. Limit the amount of wheat in the ration to no more than 2% to prevent any digestive problems. When starting goats on a feedlot ration, be sure to gradually introduce them to grain. Feeding high levels of grain suddenly can cause bloating and overeating disease. You can prevent overeating disease by vaccinating with type C and D perfringens. This is often available in one vaccine, along with tetanus. Any male goats that are castrated should receive a dose of tetanus vaccine. Castration is a personal consideration as many ethnic groups prefer to purchase intact males.

Protein Supplements

Market goats should be fed a grain ration that runs between 14% and 18% protein. To reach these protein levels, you will need to include some sort of protein supplement. Typical supplements will include soybean meal, roasted soybeans, cottonseed, brewers or distillers grains, or flour mill by-products. Beware of using any dairy protein supplements because of the amount of copper in the supplements. Many nutritionists still disagree over the amount of copper required in a goat ration, but care should still be given to overfeeding this nutrient. Protein supplements such as cottonseed or roasted soybeans can be used to increase the protein level in a grain ration.

Minerals

One of the best ways to provide minerals to a market goat is through a commercially mixed salt and mineral mix. Be sure to purchase a mix formulated specifically for goats. Allow goats free access to a mineral feeder that contains the mineral mix at all times. Minerals are especially important for helping to ensure that goats remain healthy. These mineral mixes will often include some of the essential vitamins for goats as well.

Water

Water is often one of the most overlooked aspects of livestock feeding operations. Clean, fresh water should be available at all times for all species of livestock. Animals that have adequate amounts of water are more likely to stay healthy as well as have a faster growth rate. Goats will often be able to supply all of their water needs through dew and lush pasture. However, it is still in their best interest to have a supply of water available to them at all times.

Other Feed Additives

At times you may want to include some other feed additives in a ration to maintain the health of your goats. For herds that are prone to urinary calculi, you can add ammonium chloride to prevent the disease. Another common practice is to add a coccidiostat to the ration to prevent as well as control coccidiosis. Common additives used to prevent coccidiosis include Rumensin, Bovatec or Deccox (decoquinate).

Lastly, no matter what the ration, be sure to provide enough feeder space for all the goats to eat. Plan for at least 1 foot of feeder space for each goat. You will also want to either cover feeders or make them high enough that the goats cannot jump into them. And, don't forget to clean feeders and waterers on a regular basis.

<http://extension.psu.edu/courses/meat-goat/nutrition>