

THE BASICS ON MINIATURE GOATS



CITY OF BRIGHTON

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Disclaimer: This document is meant to call attention to the significant differences between raising miniature goats and raising dogs and cats. It provides basic information as well as resources for further study, but is not intended to provide all of the information necessary to care for and raise miniature goats. Persons interested in miniature goat keeping are encouraged to complete their own research and consult a veterinarian for guidance on the care of miniature goats.

Miniature goats can make great pets who also provide ancillary benefits such as milk or fiber. Before deciding to keep goats on your residential property, it is important to understand that goats have different needs than a dog or cat. The following is a list of basic information to consider in addition to a list of resources to consult for more information:

MINIATURE GOATS IN BRIGHTON

- Miniature goat keeping in Brighton is only permitted through a pilot program. The pilot program has an initial term of 2 years. After those 2 years have expired, the City Council must take action to extend the program or all miniature goats allowed through the pilot program will need to be rehomed or removed from the property.
- In the City of Brighton, if you are going to keep miniature goats on a residential property, you must keep two miniature goats. The goats must be disbudded (hornless) females no taller than 24.5 inches at the withers.

HEALTHY GOATS

- Average lifespan of 8 to 15 years
- Normal body temperature is between 101.5°F and 104°F
- Normal pulse rate is between 60 and 90 beats per minute
- Normal respiration rate is 15-30 per minute

CLEANLINESS

- Goat bedding and waste should be cleaned often. An accumulation of feces or soiled bedding can be a breeding ground for disease.
- Some waste collection providers in Brighton do not accept goat waste. If you cannot put goat waste in your trash can, you will need to find another way to remove this waste from your property. Goat waste cannot be composted or spread on soil, lawns, or gardens in the City. Goat waste contains E. coli, nitrogen, and phosphorus that can seep into the groundwater and contaminate our streams and rivers.

SHELTER AND PEN

- Each goat will need 130 square feet of space in an outdoor pen (260 square feet for both goats). The pen should be at least ten feet from your side or rear property line, unless the property line is abutting an alley or right-of-way, and be located in the rear 50% of your lot.
- The pen should be made of sturdy fencing material as goats love to lean into and rub their coat on fences. Chicken wire is not sturdy enough and goats can pull wooden slats off fences and trap their heads in the opening that is left. Woven wire or chain link would be a good choice. The pen should be at least four feet (48 inches) tall.
- Consider providing opportunities for your goats to play and climb, just be careful not to locate any play structures too close to the fence or your goats may be able to jump out of the pen.
- The goats will also need a shelter that provides at least 25 square feet of space for each goat (50 square feet for both goats). Like the pen, the shelter should be at least 10 feet from your side or rear property line, unless the property line is abutting an alley or right-of-way, and be located in the rear 50% of your lot. Existing structures can be used, but must meet certain criteria if not meeting the 10 foot setback.
- The shelter should have a raised floor, be draft-free, have good ventilation, be easy to clean, and enclose the goats overnight to keep them dry and safe from predators.
- Consider whether the shelter will also be the place where you feed and water your goats. Will you need storage for feed and supplies? Will you need a light or water source inside the structure?
- The shelter and pen may require building permits and have other requirements than those listed here.



MILKING AND KIDS

- If you are interested in the milk that a doe can provide, keep in mind that you will need to breed her. Breeding is not permitted inside the City, so you will have to take your doe to a buck outside of the City for breeding.
- Does can produce milk for approximately 300 days. To have a continuous milk supply, you'll need to alternate breeding both of your goats.
- If you plan to milk, you'll need a holding pen, chute, or milking stand to secure the goat while you milk. In addition, you'll need stainless-steel pails or bowls, a small bowl for the first few squirts of milk, a cleanser for the doe's teats, a strainer, a funnel, and containers for the milk to be kept in the refrigerator. Good sanitary practices should be followed including washing your hands thoroughly before milking, cleaning the doe's teats prior to milking, squirting the initial milk into a separate bowl and disposing of it (this milk can contain bacteria), treating your doe's teats with teat dip or Fight Bac after milking to prevent infection, and sanitizing your milking supplies after each and every use.
- Milking requires a continuous effort. Does are milked twice per day, every day. Skipping a milking can lead to mastitis, contaminated milk, and pain for the goat.
- Make sure you have considered who will care for your goats if you go on vacation or become ill. While a neighbor can easily feed goats, it may be difficult to find someone willing to milk your lactating goat(s) while you are away.
- If you breed your goats, you'll eventually get to experience the kid birthing process. The gestation period for goats is 21 weeks. While many times the doe can handle this process on her own, there may be situations that require your intervention. Review the resources at the bottom of this document so you are prepared for this experience.
- If you decide to breed your goat(s), you will be responsible for finding a home for her kids before they are 3 months old. You will also be responsible for their care, which can include disbudding (burning emerging horns to prevent them from growing), castration, vaccinations, and bottle-feeding, if the kid refuses to nurse from the doe.

FEEDING AND NUTRITION

- Goats are ruminants, which means they have a different digestive system than humans, dogs, or cats. Goats have a four compartment stomach comprised of the rumen, reticulum, omasum, and abomasum. Goats regurgitate their food (the “cud”), chew it again, and re-swallow it as a normal digestive process. It then travels through the stomach, getting fermented and broken down further along the way to the intestines.
- A goat's digestive system works best on hay and grass. Grains are harder for goats to digest and too much grain can lead to serious diseases, such as bloat (overeating), so these should be given sparingly. Make sure you can source food for your goats before you obtain them.
- Goats may need mineral supplements to balance out their diet. You should consult your veterinarian on an appropriate supplement based on their primary diet.
- Feed should be stored in a secure place or container out of reach of goats, kids, or other animals. Feed should be offered from a feeder and never be placed on the ground. This will prevent your goats from eating too much, prevent feed from being contaminated with urine or feces, prevent disease, and ensure your investment in feed is put to good use.
- Goats typically drink 0.5 to 3 gallons of water per day and need access to fresh, clean water at all times.

RESOURCES:

Online:

Healthy Living with Back Yard Goats in Ft. Collins, CO. Colorado State University Veterinary Extension, 2007, veterinaryextension.colostate.edu/News/backyardgoats.shtml.

Small Ruminants – Sheep and Goats. Colorado State University Veterinary Extension, 2007, veterinaryextension.colostate.edu/menu2/smrumnants.shtml.

Van Meter, D. *Q Fever Fact Sheet 8.022.* Colorado State University Extension, Dec. 2014, extension.colostate.edu/docs/pubs/livestk/08022.pdf.

Goat keeping forum. thegoatspot.net

Books:

The Ohio State University Extension. *Goat Resources Handbook.* 2008. OSU Extension Publications. 2017. extensionpubs.osu.edu/goat-resource-handbook.

Weaver, Sue. *The Backyard Goat: An Introductory Guide to Keeping Productive Pet Goats.* Storey Publishing, 2011. storey.com/books/the-backyard-goat.

HEALTH AND DISEASE

- Hooves should be trimmed 3-4 times a year. Check their hooves regularly for hoof rot (also called foot rot) which presents as a strongly scented and liquid layer between the hard hoof and soft inner tissues.
- Make sure your goats are tested for Caprine Arthritic Encephalitis (CAE), Caseous Lymphadenitis (CL) and Johne's disease before you purchase them. These are deadly diseases for goats.
- Goats should be vaccinated for *Clostridium perfringens* type C and D (overeating disease), *Clostridium tetani* (tetanus), and rabies. Your veterinarian may recommend other vaccinations as well.
- Goats need to stay dry and in a draft-free shelter at night or they may develop pneumonia.
- Goats often have internal parasites (worms) and external parasites (lice, fleas, ticks). Talk with your veterinarian on ways to identify or manage parasites.
- Q fever is a zoonotic disease that can be transmitted between goats and humans. Typically, this is transmitted as an aerosol in dust or soil that has been contaminated by birth fluids or animal waste, but this can also be transmitted through unpasteurized milk. In humans, Q fever can be mild or severe with the most serious cases causing heart issues, miscarriage, stillbirth, or other pregnancy complications.
- Another illness that can be transmitted between goats and humans is Orf (sore mouth).
- Humans caring for goats should use biosecurity measures to protect themselves from diseases. The Q Fever Fact Sheet referenced at the bottom of this document suggests a variety of biosecurity measures.
- Call your veterinarian if your goat exhibits unusual behavior or an abnormal appearance.



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