

Bottle Feeding Goat Kids

What to Feed

There are two main options, either a commercial powdered goat milk replacer or whole milk from the store.

I recommend that all people new to bottle feeding using whole milk from the store. I personally find that it's easier to use, there are less steps (and thus less chance of making a mistake), plus it's quite a bit cheaper in the long run. Many times, the powder milk replacer's cause scours and the goats have a harder time adjusting to them.

You take one gallon of whole milk put it in a bottle and warm it up like you would for a human baby. There are some people that like to do the whole milk and make it a little more enticing for the baby.

1 gallon whole milk (homogenized)

1 can evaporated milk

1 cup buttermilk

Take the gallon of milk, and pour out about 1/3 and set it aside

Pour in the 1 can of evaporated milk and the 1 cup of buttermilk into the gallon then pour to the remaining milk that you set aside until you reach the top. Mix gently each time before making up a bottle.

I'm not sure who originally created this bottle feeding recipe, but it has been used by many goat breeders for way longer than I have been around. The kids seem to grow well on it, but you can also stay with the whole milk only and warm it up for each feeding.

What Type of Bottle to Use

It really isn't a big deal what type of bottle or nipple is used as long as the kid is able to nurse from it. Many breeders swear by using the Pritchard Teat nipple, while others prefer the thicker lamb nipples. Both of these can be used on a 16oz or 20oz soda or water bottle. Over the years I've found that regular baby bottles work just as well and the kids seem to be more willing to take these nipples than the larger varieties. I typically buy the cheap ones from the dollar store.

How Much to Feed

HOW MUCH TO BOTTLE FEED BABY GOATS				
WEIGHT (in lbs)	4 x DAY	3 x DAY	2 x DAY	GRAIN (per day)
5	3 oz	not recommended	not recommended	less than ¼ cup
7	4 oz	6 oz	not recommended	¼ cup
10	5 oz	7 oz	10 oz	¼ cup
15	7 oz	9 oz	14 oz	½ cup
20	8 oz	11 oz	16 oz	¾ cup
25	10 oz	13 oz	20 oz	¾ cup

This chart is a basic guideline to follow. It's best to start using the chart above when a kid is at least a week old because kids less than 1 week old will need to eat much more frequently than 4 times a day. Typically newborn kids need to be fed every 2-4 hours the first 3 days and then you can gradually start spacing out the feedings.

It's very important to weigh bottle fed kids weekly to assure that they are gaining weight, especially for the first couple of weeks. When in doubt about how much to feed always give less and leave the kid wanting more. You don't want your bottle baby to have a belly that looks like it swallowed a basketball.

How Often to Feed

Remember when you get the goats from me, I take them off their mother to go to you. They will at first be mad and they will not cooperate with you bottle feeding. Don't be discouraged as every baby is different and sometimes it can take 3 days before they will eat well. Then other babies they just take off on the first bottle. Once they are sucking from the bottle good, baby goats will always act hungry when they see you because you are acting as their mom. It's very important to not give them too much milk at one feeding because over feeding causes diarrhea which can quickly lead to dehydration. As the acting "parent" of a baby goat it is your responsibility to stop feeding them *before* they get full. **A bottle-fed baby that stops sucking from the bottle and isn't interested anymore has been fed too much** and the amount should be reduced by 1-2 ounces at the next feeding. If diarrhea occurs you can use Pedialyte instead mix up the next bottle. If loose stool continues this is typically caused by either over feeding or mixing the formula up too strong. Try diluting the bottles with more water (or Pedialyte) for the next 48 hours. As always, call your veterinarian if you are concerned. You can also give them a little Pepto-Bismol.

The frequency chart below has been compiled from several different sources, but is mostly from my own experience in raising goats over the past 10 years. This is what we follow and it works well for us.

FREQUENCY OF BOTTLE FEEDING BABY GOATS		
AGE	NUMBER of FEEDINGS	GRAIN/HAY
> 1 week	Feed every 2-4 hours as needed	_____
1-2 weeks	Feed every 4 hours (can go 6 hours without feeding during the night)	Hay &/or grass should be available at all times from here on
2-3 weeks	Feed every 5 hours (can go 8 hours without feeding during the night)	Start offering grain twice a day from here on along with hay or grass
4-5 weeks	Feed 4 times a day (breakfast, lunch, dinner and bedtime)	same as above
5-6 weeks	Feed 3 times a day (breakfast, lunch & dinner)	same as above
7-9 weeks	Feed 2 times a day	same as above
10 weeks until weaned	Feed 1 bottle a day, gradually cutting back the amount of milk given each day. Should only take 1 week to be completely weaned. Note: Kids will still <i>want</i> a bottle, but they don't <i>need</i> a bottle.	Should be eating plenty of grass and hay by now. Continue offering grain each day.

We recommend feeding a 16% protein goat feed with Decox (Decoquinat) in it. This can be found at most feed stores and may be listed as a Medicated Goat Feed or may have DQ at the end of the name. The Decoquinat helps to prevent coccidia in young kids. Once they reach 4 months old they can be switched to a non-medicated feed.

When changing grain or milk type/brand, change gradually over 5 days adding more of the new type & less of the old type at each feeding but keeping the total volume the same.

*****Disclaimer:** I am not a veterinarian. This information is based on information gathered from long time goat breeders, veterinarian comments and our past experiences. This is not intended to replace professional veterinary and/or medical advice. We disclaim all liability in connection with the use of these products and/or information.