



ANGORA GOAT

MANAGEMENT YEAR



The chart overleaf is intended as a guide only. It depicts which aspects of angora goat management are undertaken at various times of the year. This timing will vary to some extent according to individual circumstances and perhaps the area of the country in which you live.

Some tasks, e.g. **foot-trimming**, are on-going throughout the whole year, but the frequency depends on factors such as the weather and the terrain over which you run your animals. Monitoring for **lice** is another example where constant vigilance is necessary. Treatment for lice depends, among other things, on how much fleece the goats are carrying and whether the mohair is to be sent for commercial processing.

Shearing is carried out twice a year, at approximately 6-monthly intervals. In breeding stock the exact timing is linked primarily to **kidding** dates, as it is desirable for the pregnant does to be sheared about 4 weeks before they are due to kid. Likewise, it is best for both does and bucks to be sheared a few weeks before **mating** begins. If the goats are not being bred, shearing time might be more dependent on the weather, and of course there can be major differences between the north and south of the UK. Other factors to be taken into consideration might include whether you want to show your animals.

Goats are naturally seasonal **breeders**, both bucks and does starting to feel the urge for **mating** with the onset of cooler weather and fewer daylight hours in the autumn. Most angora breeders plan for the arrival of kids during late winter / early spring at times to suit their own management systems. For instance, in milder southern regions kids might be born in late January or early February and be well grown by the time the showing season starts. Breeders in the north who do not show their animals might prefer to wait for the growth of new spring grass on which to graze their young kids. In order to achieve **kidding** at these pre-planned times it is important to keep the sexes well apart at the start of the mating season and then introduce the bucks to the does about 5½ months before the desired kidding dates.

Many angora breeders wean their kids by removing them from their dams completely for several weeks. **Weaning** should only be carried out when the kids are at least three months old, growing well and able to cope with a more adult diet. If their rumens are not sufficiently well-developed they will suffer digestive upsets, possibly including scouring (diarrhoea). The purpose of weaning is to allow the does' milk supply to dry up and to help them regain lost condition in order to be fit for mating again. Care must be taken to avoid mastitis caused by this sudden, rather drastic approach. If the does are not to be mated in the coming season it is kinder to let nature take its course; often the does will make the decision themselves quite suddenly at shearing time.

Vaccination against clostridial diseases is recommended. Ideally, kids are born to mothers whose vaccinations have been kept up to date – this ensures some passive immunity for the first few weeks of life. Provided they continue to suckle, the kids then receive an initial course of vaccinations at about 8 and 12 weeks old, followed by single boosters every following January / February. For pregnant does, these boosters should be given about 4 weeks before kidding. In some circumstances, kids should be vaccinated at a younger age; in other situations your vet might recommend boosters every 6 months rather than annually.

Worming is a complex subject. During the winter months the uptake of infective worm larvae by grazing goats is minimal (zero if they are kept indoors and fed conserved forage). When the weather turns warm and wet during the spring, the worm contamination of pasture land can increase quite dramatically and the goats will become infected. Kids are particularly at risk of developing disease, adults having gradually developed a degree of immunity. The threat is reduced somewhat during hot, dry summers and increases again with the autumn flush of grass. There are 3 classes of anthelmintics (wormers) and the choice of what to use, when, and which goats to treat depends very much on individual circumstances. Faecal egg counts are a very useful monitoring tool for this purpose, and will also help to check on the effectiveness of the chosen drug.

Coccidia are another type of internal parasite, usually associated with warm, damp, dirty bedding and feeding from soiled troughs and water buckets; however infection can also occur at pasture. Not surprisingly, kids are more prone to disease than adults. Precautions can be started before kidding so that the kids do not face a sudden heavy challenge of coccidia. As with worms, diarrhoea is often the first sign of trouble, and an examination of the faeces under the microscope will help to determine which organism is responsible and therefore which medical treatment is required – wormers are not effective against coccidia.

All these aspects of angora goat management, and many more, are explained in more detail in individual information sheets available from the BAGS Office.

