



Kid rearing husbandry is massive topic that could fill countless technical notes. This note aims to outline some of the basic and critical practices of successful kid rearing. Poor rearing husbandry practices can have a significant effect on the lifetime health and production of replacement goats. Remember that the effective rearing of the minimum requirement of kids will minimise labour and cost. Some of the objectives of kid rearing are:

- Improve genetics in the herd;
- Minimise ill-health & mortality;
- Ensure kids have an effective Immune system;
- Ensure kids have a highly functioning rumen & digestive system;
- Minimise medical & vet costs;
- Maximise labour efficiency.

### Care before Birth

Care of the newborn kid begins long before birth and correct management and nutrition of the pregnant doe is essential. The body condition score should be about 3. Thin does have much lower body reserves and as a result lower milk yields. They are also slower to resume cycling and more difficult to get back in kid. Correct nutrition will:

- support foetal growth.
- support mammary tissue development.
- prevent pregnancy toxæmia (ketosis) and milk fever.
- ensure the birth of strong, healthy, kids of moderate birth weight.



Since much of the kid's growth takes place in the last month or so of pregnancy, space in the abdomen is restricted and as a result intakes can drop by 10%. Supplementing the diet with a concentrated ration will help ensure high levels of nutrition. Feed 0.6kg of an 18% protein ration to goats on high quality silage up to 1kg per day if feeding hay. Does should also be vaccinated against clostridial diseases 4-6 weeks before kidding. This allows time to boost the antibodies that can then be passed on to the kid through colostrum.

### Birth & The Birthing Environment

Hygiene is critically important to ensure your kids are healthy. Having plenty of clean, dry bedding will minimise disease pressure. Trying to reduce costs of bedding at this stage can have a significant impact on costs at a later stage. Once kids are born ensure their breathing is not impeded by mucus or foetal membranes.

Disinfection of the navel, typically with iodine, is extremely important. Dipping

helps dry out the area and kills bacteria already present. Dipping rather than spraying is more effective as it provides for greater contact with the navel and allows the dip to move up the open blood vessels.

### Colostrum

The feeding of high quality colostrum as soon as possible after birth is of critical importance to the lifetime health of the animal (see technical note on colostrum). There is a massive fall off in absorption in the first 6 hours so an early start is essential. Colostrum provides passive immunity to the kid and is a critical early source of energy. Target colostrum intake is at least 15% of body weight in the first 24 hours and ideally 50g per kg of body weight every 4 hours.

### Housing

Very young kids can be housed in individual crates or even cardboard/plastic boxes, ideally with a heat lamp or pad for warmth. This type of system is easily disinfected to eliminate transmission of disease between groups. It allows for careful monitoring of milk intake and training kids to suck on a teat.

Once kids are trained to suck they can be moved into grouped pens. These pens must:

- Have plenty of space for kids;
- Be extremely clean;
- Have plenty of bedding;
- Be warm but with adequate ventilation;
- Have a supply of well-prepared milk replacer (ideally via an automatic feeder);
- Have a supply of fresh, clean water;
- Have a steady supply of high quality concentrate (ideally in pellet form);
- Have a supply of high quality roughage (hay is ideal).
- If possible, housing should be thoroughly cleaned, disinfected and left to dry between groups.

---

**Cian Condon**

**National Goat Adviser**

**087-9196515**

**[cian.condon@teagasc.ie](mailto:cian.condon@teagasc.ie)**

