Care and Management of Goats During the Rainy Season

Dr. Goswami Mayank, Dr. Hemal B. Patel and Dr. Bhupendra Thakre
Department of Livestock Product Technology,
Department of Veterinary Public Health and Epidemiology,
Department of Veterinary Parasitology,
College of Veterinary Science and A.H., Kamdhenu University, Himmatnagar, Gujarat
Corresponding Author: drbjthakre@kamdhenuuni.edu.in

In India, sheep and goats play a vital role in the livelihood of rural communities and are often referred to as the "poor man's cow" because of their low investment requirement and high economic returns. Successful livestock rearing demands proper care and protection of animals from extreme weather conditions. Among all seasons, the monsoon poses the greatest challenge, as it promotes the spread of various pathogenic organisms such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites. During this period, goats require appropriate shelter, nutrition, and health management to protect them from heavy rainfall, strong winds, humidity, and waterlogging. This article highlights practical guidelines on care and management of goats during the monsoon, especially for rural farmers, self-help groups (SHGs), and goat entrepreneurs.

1. **Shelter Management (Prevent Wet Stress)**

Proper housing is the first line of defense against monsoon-related stress and diseases.

- **Elevated Housing:** Goat sheds should be constructed 2–3 feet above ground level to prevent waterlogging.

- **Flooring:** Use bamboo slats, cemented, or brick floors with a slight slope to allow drainage. Mud floors should be avoided.

- **Ventilation:** Adequate airflow must be ensured to reduce humidity and prevent respiratory problems.

- **Bedding:** Provide dry straw, husk, or sawdust as bedding and replace it daily to maintain dryness.

- **Leak-Proof Roofing:** Regularly check the roof for leaks; use tin sheets or tarpaulin where necessary.

- **Drainage System:** Construct proper water channels around the shed to avoid stagnant water.

Shelter for Sheep and Goat

2. **Feeding and Fodder Management**

During the rainy season, goats require nutritious and hygienic feed as movement is restricted and stress levels increase.

- **Dry Fodder:** Harvest and sun-dry green fodder before the rains. Avoid feeding wet, spoiled, or fermented fodder.
- **Avoid Moldy Feed:** Spoiled grains may contain fungal toxins that are harmful and sometimes fatal.
- **Mineral Mixture and Salt Licks:** Provide regularly to boost immunity and aid digestion.
- **Tree Leaves and Shrubs:** Leaves of neem, babool, and subabool serve as excellent fodder during the monsoon.
- **Clean Drinking Water:** Ensure supply of clean and stored water; avoid allowing goats to drink from rainwater puddles, which may carry infections.

Feeding Management of Sheep and Goats

3. **Health and Disease Prevention**

Preventive health care, especially vaccination and parasite control, is crucial during the monsoon.

Importance of Vaccination: Vaccination protects goats from infectious diseases, improves animal welfare, and enhances farm profitability. Healthy animals show better growth, reproduction, and milk and meat production.

Vaccination schedule of Goat:

Name of Disease	Age	Booster Dose	Time of Vaccine
Foot & Mouth Disease	4 M	9M	February & December or September & march
Hemorrhagic Septicemia	6 M	12 M	May- June (Before monsoon)
Black quarter	6 M	12M	May- June (Before monsoon)
Anthrax	6 M	12M	May- June (only in endemic areas)
Goat pox/Sheep pox	3 M	-	December
Enterotoxemia	3M	After 15 days	In endemic areas, preferably in May
Tetanus	6M	-	At 3 ½ of pregnancy
PPR	4 M	-	Once in 3 years
CCPP	-		January

Deworming:

Deworming controls internal parasites that adversely affect health and productivity.

- First deworming should be done at **three months of age**.
- Deworming should be carried out **before the monsoon (May–June)** every year.
- In waterlogged areas, deworming should be done **twice a year**—before and after the monsoon.

- Commonly used dewormers include albendazole, fenbendazole, praziquantel, and ivermectin.

Dipping:

- Dipping helps control ticks, mites, lice, and flies.

- It should be done **twice a year**—once before summer and once before winter.

- **Avoid dipping during the rainy season**, as it may cause stress and infections.

4. Special Care for Kids and Pregnant Goats

Young kids and pregnant does are highly vulnerable during the monsoon.

- **Dry Kidding Area:** Prepare a clean, warm, and dry pen for kidding.

- **Colostrum Feeding:** Ensure colostrum intake within one hour of birth to build immunity.

- **Warmth:** Dry newborn kids immediately and provide warmth using dry cloths or heat lamps if required.

- **Avoid Wet Floors:** Never allow kids to lie on damp surfaces, as it increases the risk of pneumonia.

5. Breeding and Reproduction Caution

- Avoid breeding during peak monsoon to reduce stress and complications.

- Plan breeding before or after the monsoon for better conception rates.

- Provide pregnant does with additional dry feed and vitamin supplements.

- Restrict movement in slippery or flooded areas to prevent injuries.

6. Waste and Hygiene Management

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- Plan breeding **before or after the monsoon** for better conception rates.

- Provide pregnant does with additional dry feed and vitamin supplements.

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7. Record Keeping and Monitoring
Proper monitoring helps detect health problems early.

Maintain Records of:

- Vaccination dates

- Deworming schedules

- Breeding and kidding details

- Disease occurrence and treatment

Daily Observation:

- Watch for signs such as fever, cough, lameness, diarrhea, or loss of appetite.

- Immediately isolate sick animals and consult a veterinarian.

Conclusion:

Effective shelter, nutrition, hygiene, and health management during the monsoon can significantly reduce disease incidence and mortality in goats. Adoption of these practices will help farmers improve productivity, animal welfare, and income sustainability during the challenging rainy season.