



Goat Health Guide:

Parasite Management

The #1 Concern for Goat Owners

Internal parasites are the leading cause of health issues in goats. Because parasites develop resistance to dewormers very quickly, relying solely on chemical treatment is no longer effective. **Management is key.**

1. "Which dewormer should I use?"

Stop asking which one, and start asking IF you should use one. Blanket deworming (treating the whole herd) creates resistance.

- **Consult a Veterinarian:** Do not buy over-the-counter dewormers without knowing what parasites are actually in your herd.
 - **Fecal Testing:** Run a Fecal Egg Count (FEC) to identify the specific type of worm and the parasite load.
 - **Resistance Checks:** Only use a dewormer if you know it still works on your farm (resistance varies by location).
 - **Dosing: Goats metabolize dewormers faster than sheep or cattle.** Always use the dosage recommended by a veterinarian, not the dosage on the bottle meant for sheep.
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2. "How do I know if my goat has worms without testing?"

While fecal tests are the only definitive way to count eggs, look for these physical signs of a heavy parasite load:

- **Weight Loss / Poor Body Condition:** The goat feels bony along the spine and ribs despite eating.
- **Rough Coat:** Hair is dull, dry, or standing on end.
- **Diarrhea (Scours):** Persistent runny manure (Note: *Barber Pole Worm* often causes anemia without diarrhea).
- **Lagging:** The goat is consistently slow or stays behind the herd.

3. "What is FAMACHA scoring and how do I do it?"

FAMACHA is a system used to identify clinical anemia caused specifically by the **Barber Pole Worm** (*Haemonchus contortus*), which sucks blood from the goat's stomach lining.

How to do it:

1. **Get Certified:** You can get a FAMACHA card and instruction from a vet or extension agent.
 2. **Expose:** Gently cover the goat's eye, press down on the upper lid, and pull down the lower lid to expose the inner eyelid mucosa.
 3. **Compare:** Compare the color of the mucosa to the chart (1 = Red/Healthy, 5 = White/Severe Anemia).
 4. **Act:** Only deworm goats with a score of 3 (moderate) to 5 (severe), depending on the goat's overall health and veterinarian advice.
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4. "Why are my goats still losing weight even though I dewormed them?"

This is a very common issue. Here are the likely culprits:

- **Resistance:** The dewormer you used no longer kills the worms in your goats.
 - **Immediate Reinfection:** After deworming, you put the goat back onto the same contaminated pasture.
 - **Damage is Done:** Heavy worm loads damage the gut lining permanently, reducing the goat's ability to absorb nutrients even after the worms are gone.
 - **Not Worms:** Weight loss can be caused by other issues like **Johne's Disease**, **CAE**, dental issues, or poor nutrition.
 - **Other Parasites:** The dewormer only killed *stomach* worms, but the goat may have tapeworms, lungworms, or coccidia.
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Pro-Tip for Management

Pasture Management is Your Best Tool. Parasite larvae live in the bottom 2 inches of grass.

- **Rotate Pastures:** Move goats frequently to prevent ingestion of larvae.
- **Graze High:** Do not let goats graze pastures down to the dirt.
- **Mix Grazing:** Graze cattle or horses in the same pastures (they eat the goat larvae, which then die in the wrong host).

