

**Introduction to Goat Nutrition**  
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**Unit Objective**

After completion of this module of instruction, the producer should be able to state the nutritional needs of the goat and to adjust the nutritional needs at specified times during the goat's production cycle. The producer should be able to recognize nutritional deficiencies or toxicity within the goat herd and make management decisions for correcting such deficiencies and to be able to use the Langston Interactive Nutrient Calculator for specific goat rations. The producer should be able to complete all assignments with 100% accuracy and score a minimum of 85% on the module test.

**Specific Objectives**

After completion of this instructional module the producer should be able to:

1. Match terms associated with nutrition to the correct definition.
2. Match the parts of the goat's stomach to the digestive function.
3. State the function of bacteria contained within the goats stomach.
4. Identify the six classes of nutrients.
5. State the function of each of the six classes of nutrients.
6. State some causes when there is a deficiency of energy in the goat's diet.
7. State how fiber is characterized in the goat's diet.
8. Distinguish between fat and water soluble vitamins.
9. Match the different vitamins to the function that each provide related to goat nutrition.
10. Distinguish between macrominerals and microminerals.
11. Match each mineral to the function that each provides with goat nutrition.
12. State the major source of minerals that goats consume.
13. State the most important criteria when choosing a mineral supplement.
14. State the purpose of integrating salt within a mineral mix.
15. State the approximate yearly cost of minerals for each 150 pound goat.
16. State the acceptable procedure for identification of mineral deficiencies or toxicities.
17. State some nutritional requirements for the kidding season.
18. State the meaning of body condition scoring.
19. Match the optimum body condition score during specific periods of the production cycle.
20. State the meaning of applied nutrition.
21. State feeding requirements for different classes of goats.
22. State the considerations for and purpose of creep feeding goat kids.
23. State the function and need for feeding colostrum.
24. Identify some considerations for ration formulation.
25. State requirements for feeding systems.

26. Match diseases that are associated with nutritional disorders with symptoms.  
27. Use the Langston University Interactive Nutrient Calculator for specific goat rations.

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## **Introduction**

Proper nutrition is essential for the health and productivity of all animals and is the basis of successful production systems. A well planned and executed preventive health program cannot overcome problems that are created by poor nutrition. Nor can advanced reproductive technologies overcome nutritional limitations of reproduction. Therefore, nutrition of the goat is of paramount importance for successful goat production. Nutrition is the science of providing nutrients to animals in adequate amounts and in forms that the animals will consume. For sustainable and profitable production, these nutrients must also be provided in a cost-effective manner.

### ***The ruminant stomach***

Goats are ruminants, animals with a four-compartment stomach, as are cattle, sheep, and deer. The compartments are the reticulum, rumen, omasum, and abomasum (true stomach). Monogastric or simple-stomached animals such as humans, dogs, and cats consume food that undergoes acidic breakdown in the stomach and enzymatic digestion in the small intestine where most nutrients are absorbed. In ruminants, feed first undergoes microbial digestion in the reticulum and rumen (together often called the reticulo-rumen) prior to acidic digestion in the abomasum and enzymatic digestion and nutrient absorption in the small intestine. It is the microbial digestion in the reticulo-rumen that allows ruminants to consume and utilize grass, hay, leaves, browse, etc.

The reticulum and rumen form a large fermentation vat that contains microorganisms, mainly bacteria, that breakdown and digest feedstuffs, including the fibrous component of grass, forbs, and browse that cannot be digested by monogastric animals. Some of the breakdown products produced through digestion of feed by bacteria are absorbed by the animal through the rumen wall and can supply a large part of the energy needs. The rest of the byproducts of digestion, undigested feed, and ruminal microorganisms flow out of the reticulo-rumen into the omasum where large feed particles are trapped for further digestion and water is reabsorbed. Material then flows into the abomasum where acidic digestion takes place and then to the small intestine for further enzymatic digestion and nutrient absorption.

The rumen provides several advantages to the goat in addition to digestion of dietary fiber. The bacteria in the rumen are capable of synthesizing all B vitamins needed. Bacteria can also synthesize protein from nitrogen recycled in the body, which may be advantageous on low protein diets. For proper ruminal function, goats require a certain level of fiber (measured as crude fiber, acid detergent fiber, or neutral detergent fiber) in the diet. Goats have bacteria in the rumen that can detoxify antinutritional factors, such as tannins. This enables goats to better utilize feedstuffs containing high tannin levels such as those found in browse. There are very few situations in which a goat will not consume adequate fiber, but one is when a very high grain diet is being fed. Inadequate fiber consumption can then lead to several disease conditions. The most important disease condition is acidosis or an extremely low pH in the rumen, causing decreased feed consumption.

When ruminants are born, the first three compartments of the stomach are underdeveloped and the stomach functions similar to that of a monogastric animal. This enables absorption of antibodies in colostrum and efficient utilization of nutrients in milk. As the young ruminant consumes solid feed, especially high in fiber, and the microbial population is established, the rumen is stimulated to develop. The rumen must have an acceptable degree of development for successful weaning.

The greatest asset of goats is the ability and tendency to utilize woody plants and weeds not typically consumed by other species of animals (e.g., cattle and sheep) and converting them into a saleable product. Therefore, these plant species can be inexpensive sources of nutrients and make for a very profitable goat enterprise. Goats typically consume a number of different plant species in any one day and can utilize some poisonous plants because they do not consume enough to be toxic. Similarly, goats are believed to have a relatively high ability to detoxify absorbed anti-nutritional factors. Goats are more resistant to bloating than other ruminants, and after a brief adaptation may graze alfalfa without bloating.

## **Nutrients**

Nutrients are defined as substances that aid in the support of life. The six classes of nutrients include protein, carbohydrate, fat, vitamins, minerals, and water. Nutrients are often classified as organic (carbon-containing) or inorganic (minerals).

Energy is not considered a nutrient, but can be derived from the breakdown of several nutrients including fat, protein, and both simple and complex carbohydrates. Energy is required to propel the biochemical processes that are necessary to sustain life. A deficiency of energy will cause weight loss, low productivity, and ultimate death of an animal. An oversupply of energy will usually result in excessive fatness, which is also unhealthy. A simple unit of measurement of energy is pounds of total digestible nutrients (TDN). A lb of TDN, equivalent to a pound of digested carbohydrate, equals 2,000 Kilocalories (or Calories as used in human nutrition) of digestible energy. There are a number of other measures of energy used, but they are less easily understood.

### ***Water***

Water is an essential nutrient for all animals and is sometimes overlooked. While goats require less water than cattle, they do need water and require additional supplies when lactating or coping with hot weather. A 110 lb goat will require 1 to 3 gallons of water per day depending upon diet, intake, and weather, toward the lower range in winter and toward the upper range in the hottest days of summer. A lactating goat will require an additional 1 quart of water for every 1 pint of milk produced. If a goat is producing 5 pints of milk at peak lactation while raising twins, 2.5 gallons of water are required each day. If goats are eating green material, a substantial part of their water requirement can be met by water contained in the plant material. However, if dry feed such as hay is consumed, water must be supplied to meet the requirement.

Water should be kept clean to encourage intake. This usually involves regular cleaning of the waterer. It is important that the area around the waterer not be muddy, as this is a good environment to spread foot rot and internal parasites. Placing some rock or gravel around the waterer can help keep feet dry and reduce disease problems. Water cleanliness is especially important for bucks on high grain diets. Their water needs to be shaded in summer and warm in the winter to encourage intake and reduce the risk of urinary calculi.

### ***Carbohydrates***

Carbohydrates usually provide the majority of energy to goats. Carbohydrates can be classified as simple, such as sugars (easily identified by their sweet taste; maybe 1, 2, or 3 sugar molecules linked together), or complex, such as starch (found in grains) or cellulose (i.e., fiber). Grass, forb, and browse plant species generally contain high levels of cellulose, which must be digested by rumen bacteria to provide energy.

Cellulose is often referred to as fiber, although the term fiber also pertains to other substances such as hemicellulose and lignin. Fiber in young plants may be highly digestible and provide a high level of energy, but fiber in older, mature plants is often poorly digested and may only provide half the energy of other carbohydrates. Fiber in the diet may be characterized chemically in several ways, such as crude fiber (CF), acid detergent fiber (ADF), and neutral detergent fiber (NDF). These abbreviations are used in hay analysis and may appear on feed tags. In general, the lower the fiber level, the higher the level of digestible energy. However, a certain minimum fiber level is required for healthy rumen function.

Goats do not adapt as easily to high concentrate diets as cattle and sheep and are more likely to get acidosis, founder, urinary calculi, and enterotoxemia. To avoid these problems, very gradually increase the concentrate level in the diet when placing goats on high concentrate diets and maintain a minimum of 12% crude fiber in the diet or about half of the diet as grass, browse, or hay. Goats are typically not feed efficient, except for some rapidly growing Boer goats, and may require 7 lbs or more of feed per pound of gain. Also, one must be very alert for health problems with goats on high grain diets.

### ***Fats***

Fats, also called lipids, are very high in energy, providing more than twice the energy of carbohydrate on a weight basis. The fat content of ruminant diets is generally low, as plants have a low fat content. Plant waxes are fats that goats consume as they graze and browse, but they are not digested. Fat may be added to diets to increase the energy content. However, high levels of added fat depress fiber digestion unless treated to be inactive in the rumen. These fat sources are termed “bypass” and may be used in dairy goat diets but are generally not used in meat goat diets.

## ***Protein***

Protein is composed of building blocks called amino acids that the body uses to produce all of the different proteins required for growth, production, and maintenance. Protein is required in the diet for accumulation of new body mass (growth) and for replacing protein lost by normal wear and tear.

Ruminant animals are usually fed supplemental protein to make up for dietary shortfalls. In the rumen, bacteria degrade much of the consumed protein and use the amino acids to form bacterial protein. Bacteria can also form protein from nonprotein sources such as urea and, if provided with sufficient energy, can form significant quantities of protein. To prevent breakdown and digestion by ruminal bacteria, some protein sources are protected from degradation by coating or other means. Some natural proteins are also resistant to ruminal degradation by bacteria. These types of proteins are referred to as “bypass protein” as they bypass digestion in the rumen. Other common terms for bypass protein are “ruminal escape” and “rumen undegraded.” Bypass protein sources are very important in dairy cow nutrition, but have lesser significance in most meat goat production systems.

Urea is the main nonprotein nitrogen source fed to ruminants. However, goats are not fed urea as frequently as cattle are. This may be because goats are more subject to urea toxicity than cattle. Goats appear more efficient than other species at recycling nitrogen in the body to the rumen where it can be used to form microbial protein, given that sufficient energy is available. This recycling of urea to the rumen helps to reduce the amount of protein required in the diet. When animals are consuming a low quality forage, a grain supplement may also improve protein status by providing additional energy for protein synthesis by ruminal microbes.

## ***Vitamins***

Vitamins function as critical chemicals in the body’s metabolic machinery and function as co-factors in many metabolic processes. A deficiency of a vitamin will slow or block the metabolic process in which that vitamin is involved, resulting in deficiency symptoms. Vitamins are divided into those that are fat soluble (i.e., A, D, E, and K) and those that are water soluble (i.e., B vitamins and C).

The bacteria in the rumen of the goat can synthesize adequate amounts of the water soluble vitamins. Thiamine, or vitamin B1, may become deficient under some conditions (e.g., feeding a high concentrate diet, especially those with high sulfur which may come from a high level of molasses) and cause the disease polioencephalomalacia. Another situation that could lead to thiamine deficiency is improper feeding of the coccidiostat Albon. The coccidiostat ties up thiamine, making the coccidia unable to reproduce. Feeding Albon longer or at higher levels than recommended could lead to polioencephalomalacia. Polioencephalomalacia is a nervous disorder where the animal becomes blind, depressed, presses with his head, and the pupil slit in the eyes becomes up and down rather than the normal side to side profile. Treatment requires immediate injection of large quantities of thiamine.

Fat soluble vitamins must be supplied to the goat because the body cannot directly make them. The recommended levels of vitamins in formulated feed is 5,000 IU (international units, a measure of the potency of vitamins) of vitamin A per lb, 2,000 IU/lb of vitamin D, and 20 IU/lb of Vitamin E. The liver can store significant amounts of the fat soluble vitamins.

**Vitamin A** can be synthesized from carotene, the pigment that gives grass and hay their green color. As long as sufficient green feed is consumed, vitamin A intake will be adequate. Vitamin A is necessary for normal epithelium (skin) development and vision. A deficiency of vitamin A causes many symptoms, including tearing of the eyes, diarrhea, susceptibility to respiratory infection, and reproduction problems. Vitamin A is often supplied to animals not consuming green forage such as in winter months. Many mineral and vitamin supplements contain vitamin A.

**Vitamin D** is called the sunshine vitamin because animals can synthesize the vitamin with the help of the sun. Ultraviolet light in sunshine converts pre-vitamin D found in the skin to a pro-vitamin D form that is used by the animals. Usually, even limited sunlight exposure is adequate to provide a days' supply of vitamin D. Sun-cured hay contains Vitamin D. Vitamin D is necessary for calcium absorption and metabolism by the body. A deficiency of vitamin D, called rickets, results in lameness, weak bones, and bowed and crooked legs. The liver is the main Vitamin D storage site in the body. Vitamin D is normally present in mineral supplements and often added to complete feeds.

**Vitamin E** functions as an antioxidant in conjunction with the mineral selenium. The requirements for one can be partially met by the other. Thus, vitamin E is very important in areas with marginal or deficient levels of selenium. A common vitamin E deficiency disease, particularly in newborn or young animals, is white muscle disease, where white spots are seen in the heart and skeletal muscle due to oxidation damage. A marginal deficiency of vitamin E can depress the immune system and cause reproductive failure. Green grass and green sun-cured hay have high levels of vitamin E. Most mineral supplements and complete feeds contain vitamin E, especially in areas that are deficient in selenium. Vitamin E is expensive and minimal supplemental levels are used in contrast to vitamins A and D that are less expensive and often included at generous levels.

**Vitamin K** is technically required by animals and functions in the clotting of blood. Vitamin K is produced by bacteria in the digestive tract and absorbed. Generally, goats do not need to be supplemented with vitamin K.

### ***Minerals***

The inorganic nutrients are called minerals. Minerals are further subdivided into macrominerals, those required at 0.1% or more in the diet (macro means large), and microminerals, those required at the part per million (ppm) level (micro means small). A ppm is the weight of a paperclip in a thousand pounds of feed. A hundred ppm is equal to 1.6 ounces in a thousand pounds of feed. Macrominerals include calcium, phosphorus, sodium, potassium, chloride, sulfur, and magnesium. Microminerals include iron, copper, cobalt, manganese, zinc, iodine,

selenium, molybdenum, and others. Minerals function in many ways in the body. Some such as calcium and phosphorus are major structural components of bones and teeth, as well as having other functions. Other minerals facilitate nerve functioning or fulfill a role as electrolytes. The mineral requirements for goats are not as well known as they are for other livestock species and have often been extrapolated from sheep or cattle requirements due to a lack of studies in goats. As such, mineral recommendations for goats often have a wide range because of lack of accurate goat-specific information.

## **Macrominerals**

The macrominerals are listed below, followed by the abbreviation, normal dietary range, function, deficiency symptoms, and major dietary sources.

### *Calcium (Ca) 0.3 - 0.8%*

The major biological function of calcium is for bones. Bones contain 99% of the calcium in body. Calcium is also necessary for muscle contraction, nerve conduction, and blood clotting. The main deficiency symptoms are seen in the skeletal system. Bones can become soft and weak and may be deformed resulting in lameness. This condition is called rickets or osteomalacia. Vitamin D deficiency causes similar symptoms due to the role of vitamin D in the absorption and metabolism of calcium. Calcium is relatively high in milk and lactating goats need adequate levels of calcium for milk production. Does can get hypocalcemia (milk fever) while lactating due to a metabolic disorder which results in a shortage of calcium in the blood due to calcium being used for milk production. Urinary calculi is a condition brought about in part by an imbalance in the calcium to phosphorus ratio in the diet. Generally, twice as much calcium as phosphorus should be in the diet of ruminant animals. An excess of calcium can cause abnormal bone growth. Major common dietary sources of calcium include limestone and dicalcium phosphate.

### *Phosphorus (P) 0.25 - 0.4%*

Approximately 80% of the body's phosphorus is found in bones, with the remainder in the blood and other tissues. In addition to skeletal structural functions, phosphorus is essential in energy metabolism, acid-base balance, and is a constituent of enzymes and genetic material. The major symptoms of phosphorus deficiency include reduced growth, listlessness, unkempt appearance, depressed fertility, pica (depraved appetite-eating wood, rocks and bones), and decreased serum phosphorus. Phosphorus is the most commonly encountered mineral deficiency and also the most expensive macromineral. Sources of phosphorus include protein supplements, cereal byproducts, mineral supplements, and dicalcium phosphate.



*Sodium (Na) 0.2%*

*Potassium (K) 0.8 - 2.0%*

*Chloride (Cl) 0.2%*

All three of these minerals function as electrolytes in the body. Electrolytes are mineral ions, carrying a positive or negative charge that the body uses for osmotic balance, pH balance, and water movement. They are also essential in transmission of nerve impulses. These minerals are highly water soluble and are easily lost with diarrhea. Electrolyte solutions used to treat animals with diarrhea contain all three of these minerals. A deficiency of potassium could occur on high concentrate diets, with symptoms including poor appetite, urinary calculi, body stiffness progressing from front to rear, and pica (depraved appetite as described above). A deficiency of chloride depresses growth. A deficiency of sodium causes reduced growth and feed efficiency. Salt provides both sodium and chloride. Most forages have adequate levels of potassium.

*Sulfur (S) 0.2 - 0.32%*

The major biological function of sulfur is as a component of sulfur-containing amino acids. Therefore, sulfur is important in protein synthesis, milk and hair production, enzymes, hormones, hemoglobin, and connective tissue, and is a component of the vitamins biotin and thiamine. The major deficiency symptoms include poor animal performance, hair loss, excessive salivation, tearing of eyes, and weakness. Major source of sulfur is protein which contains sulfur as a component of some of the amino acids. Therefore, sulfur is important in diets where nonprotein nitrogen (e.g., urea) is used to substitute for some protein. Sulfur-containing mineral blocks are often used for control of external parasites in goats. Excessive sulfur in high concentrate diets can contribute to polioencephalomalacia as discussed for the water soluble vitamin thiamine.

*Magnesium (Mg) 0.18 - 0.4%*

Magnesium is found in bones (60 – 70% of that in the body), liver, muscle, and blood. It is required for normal skeletal development, and nervous and muscular system functions, as well as for enzyme systems. It is also closely associated with metabolism of calcium and phosphorus. In ruminants, a major magnesium deficiency disease is grass tetany, often seen on fast-growing, lush, cool season pastures. Affected animals have low blood magnesium levels, exhibit a loss of appetite, are excitable, stagger, have convulsions, and may die. High fertilization rates, cool temperatures, and high levels of plant potassium and(or) rumen ammonia may contribute to the disease. A major supplemental source of magnesium is magnesium oxide. It is often supplemented on winter wheat pasture and mixed with a protein source to encourage consumption.

### **Micro or trace elements**

The first level after the mineral name is what is thought to be the minimum requirement in the diet, while the second is the value above which the element can become toxic. Most supplemental trace minerals are provided by trace mineralized salt or mineral mixes that are designed to provide 25 to 50% of requirements. This is adequate if the animal's diet is marginal

in a mineral but inadequate if that mineral is severely deficient. Unless a documented deficiency exists, it is best not to provide 100% of a trace mineral, because an excess of one mineral may depress the absorption of another creating a deficiency. Excess supplementation of some minerals can cause toxicity problems, especially with copper and selenium.

#### *Iron (Fe) 50 – 1000 ppm*

The major function of iron is as a component of hemoglobin, required for oxygen transport. It is also a component of certain enzymes. The major iron deficiency symptom is anemia. Anemia can also be caused by blood loss due to several factors, including injury, internal parasites (barber pole worm or liver fluke), and a bad case of external parasites such as lice. Iron is stored in the liver, spleen, and bone marrow. Milk is very low in iron; therefore, kids raised for a long time on milk alone will develop anemia. Soil contamination on forages can provide significant levels of dietary iron. Iron sulfate is a common means of adding iron to the diet. Forages in some areas have excessively high levels of iron that suppress utilization of other trace minerals

#### *Copper (Cu) 10 - 80 ppm*

Copper is essential in formation of red blood cells, hair pigmentation, connective tissue, and enzymes. It is also important in normal immune system function and nerve conduction. Deficiency symptoms include anemia, “bleached” looking (lighter color) and rough hair coat, diarrhea, and weight loss. Young goats may experience progressive incoordination and paralysis, especially in the rear legs. High dietary molybdenum can depress absorption of copper and cause a deficiency. There should be at least four times as much copper as molybdenum in the diet.

Sheep (both hair and wool types) are sensitive to copper toxicity, whereas goats require copper levels similar to beef cattle. Angora goats may be more sensitive to copper toxicity than meat and dairy goats. There are differences in copper requirements for several sheep breeds, and this could be true for meat goats, but no data are available. Many areas have high levels of molybdenum due to soil geology and, therefore, require copper supplementation. The liver stores copper, which can protect against toxicity in the short term. However, when liver capacity is exceeded, animals can die rapidly from a hemolytic crisis caused by stress, such as being chased.

#### *Cobalt (Co) 0.1 - 10 ppm*

The only well accepted biological function of cobalt is as a component of vitamin B<sub>12</sub>. Rumen microbes utilize cobalt for growth and produce vitamin B<sub>12</sub>. Cobalt deficiency symptoms include loss of appetite, anemia, decreased production, and weakness. Most natural feedstuffs contain adequate levels of cobalt.

*Zinc (Zn) 40 – 500 ppm*

Zinc is found in all animal tissue and required by the immune system and for normal skin growth. Zinc is also essential for male reproduction. Deficiency symptoms include dermatitis (thick, dry patches of skin), hair loss, skin lesions, swollen feet, and poor hair growth. The bran and germ of cereals contain high levels of zinc.

*Manganese (Mn) 40 – 1000 ppm*

Manganese is important for bone formation, reproduction, and enzyme functioning. Deficiency symptoms include a reluctance to walk, deformity of forelegs, delayed onset of estrus, poor conception rate, and low birth weight. It is unusual to have a manganese deficiency.

*Selenium (Se) 0.1 – 3 ppm*

Selenium functions with vitamin E as an antioxidant, protecting cell membranes from oxidation. Selenium also affects reproduction, metabolism of copper, cadmium, mercury, sulfur, and vitamin E. Deficiency symptoms include poor growth rate, kids being unable to suckle, white muscle disease (cardiac and skeletal muscles have white spots), sudden death by heart attack, progressive paralysis, and retained afterbirth. Selenium is deficient in many areas because of low soil levels (geological factors); however, there are a few regions of high selenium soils leading to high to toxic levels in plants. Toxic levels of selenium cause shedding of hair, diarrhea, and lameness. Most plants that are not grown in selenium deficient soils will have adequate selenium levels. It is more effective to provide selenium supplementation through feed than by injection.

*Molybdenum (Mo) 0.1 – 3 ppm*

Molybdenum deficiencies are very rare. Toxicity occurs above 3 ppm due to reduced copper absorption, resulting in a copper deficiency. The copper level must be four times the molybdenum level to overcome this effect. High dietary levels of molybdenum are usually related to soil content. Molybdenum (as ammonium tetrathiomolybdate) is often used to treat copper toxicity in animals.

*Iodine (I) 0.5 – 50 ppm*

The only proven biological function of iodine is as a component of thyroid hormones that regulate energy metabolism and reproductive function. The major iodine deficiency symptom is goiter - a swelled or enlarged thyroid gland in the neck. This should not be confused with the thymus gland in the neck on young animals (the thymus gland is especially pronounced in Nubian kids, but shrinks after several months of age). Also, iodine deficiency causes reduced growth and milk yield, pregnancy toxemia, and reproductive problems such as late term abortion, hairless fetus, retained placenta, and weak kids. Most of the southern U.S. has adequate iodine in the soil and most minerals and trace mineralized salts contain iodine. A number of areas in the northern U.S. are deficient in iodine due to soil geology.

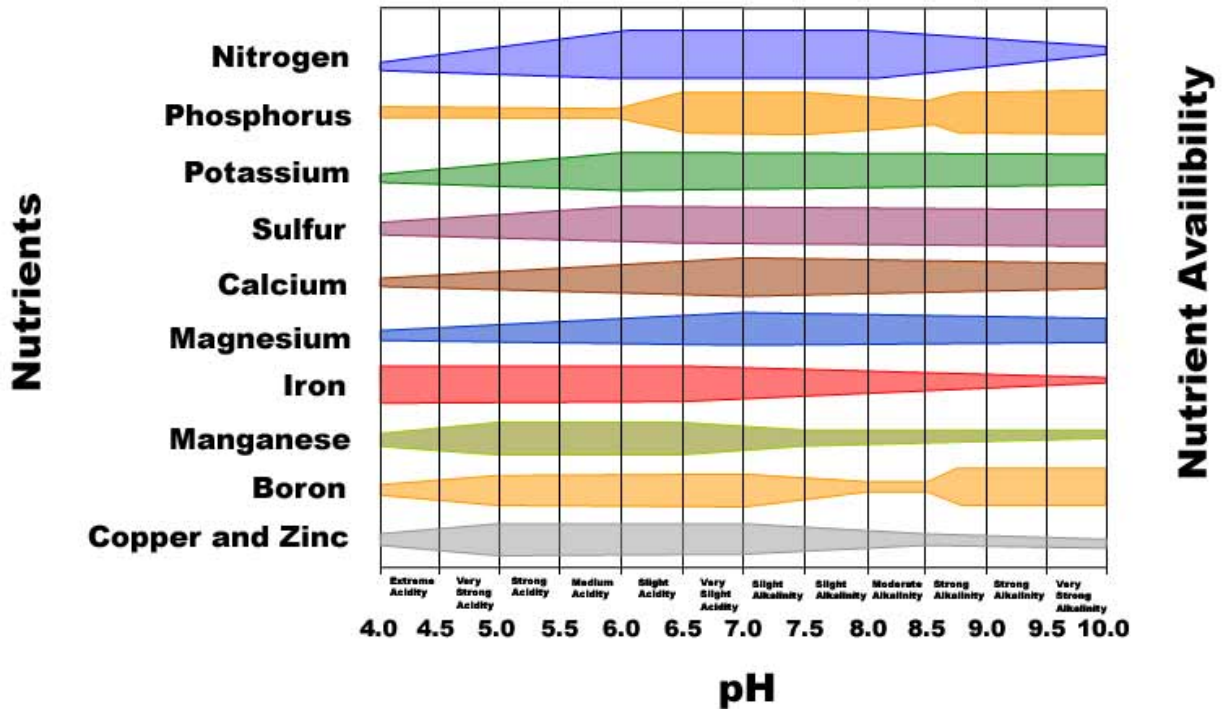
## Mineral Nutrition Considerations

Plants are a major source of minerals for the goat, containing all minerals that goats require except iodine. However, plant requirements for minerals, such as cobalt and selenium, may be much lower than the level required for animals. Some soils are inherently deficient in some minerals such as iodine and selenium due to soil geology. Plants grown on soils deficient in a mineral are likely to be deficient in that mineral. However, some plants have an ability to concentrate the minerals available in the soil. Maps of mineral deficient areas of the U.S. are available. However, consulting local extension agents is a better method of determining soil mineral deficiencies or toxicities that could affect mineral levels in local forages. [Soil maps showing deficient areas of selenium, copper, molybdenum, and cobalt are located at the end of this module.](#)

Various factors other than soil mineral level can interact to influence the mineral content of forages. Soil pH is one factor that affects mineral uptake by plants. Under acidic soil conditions, many trace minerals are less available for plant uptake. Environmental temperature at certain times of the year may also affect mineral uptake. Interactions among minerals after soil fertilization can also affect their availability for incorporation into plant material. Season of the year affects plant mineral concentrations, mainly due to a dilution effect, with decreasing mineral levels as plants grow. Different plant species will also have varying contents. Browse and forb plant species may have higher mineral concentrations than do some grasses. As goats eat a variety of plants, they are less likely to have mineral deficiencies than other species of animals that eat predominantly one plant species.

To determine plant mineral content a producer can collect and send samples for analysis. Parts of plants that are being consumed throughout the day and growing season should be sampled. Analysis of a sample may cost up to \$25.00. To obtain enough data to formulate a custom mineral supplement would require sampling several times over a growing season and over more than 1 year if possible. This could be worthwhile for a large goat herd but too expensive for most producers. The alternative is to use a commercially prepared mineral block or loose supplement. Some mineral mixes are customized for regions and are more appropriate to use than a general nation-wide mineral. Many state extension specialists know what minerals are likely to be deficient in given areas of a state and know what levels of calcium and phosphorus are appropriate for beef cattle production. Those recommendations are a good place to start for goat mineral nutrition.

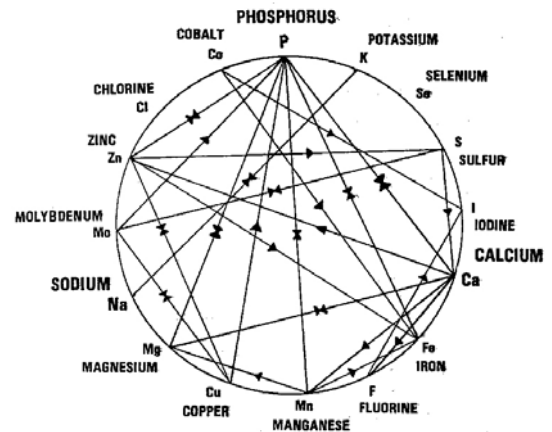
## Influence of pH on Availability of Plant Nutrients



(S.S.S.A.P., 1946. 11:305.)

Mineral supplements should not be overfed. Mineral supplements are formulated for goats consume a sufficient quantity. Many minerals interact with one another and excess consumption of one mineral may decrease absorption and(or) utilization of another. For example, it is well known that excess iron depresses absorption of zinc, copper, manganese, and selenium. There are several regions of the United States that have high enough levels of iron to depress absorption of these other minerals, requiring them to be supplemented. Feeding a regional mineral with no supplemental iron would be preferable to feeding an all-purpose mineral containing high levels of iron that would further depress absorption of these minerals.

### MINERAL INTERRELATIONSHIPS



The range between safe supplementation and toxic levels is quite narrow for many of the trace minerals. Do not overfeed trace minerals or mix additional minerals in a diet if another source of

trace minerals, such as a trace mineral block, is present. Formulation of mineral supplements requires considerable expertise since the addition of high levels of one may depress the utilization of another, causing a deficiency. Also, some trace minerals can be toxic in excess.

Calculation of supplemental levels for feed formulas requires a certain amount of technical expertise and specialized scales for weighing, along with sophisticated mixing equipment. Most common farm mixing methods are inadequate, resulting in “pockets” of dangerously high mineral levels in a batch of feed.

### ***Choosing a mineral supplement***

The most important consideration in choosing a mineral supplement is the level of calcium and phosphorus. Some mineral mixes are designated 12 - 8, which means they contain 12% calcium and 8% phosphorus. The levels of these two minerals should be the same that is being fed to cattle in your area (contact your county agent or livestock extension specialist). Phosphorus is expensive, so a 12 - 12 mineral will cost more than one that is 12 - 8. However, most forages are low in phosphorus, making it the most common mineral deficiency.

The mineral supplement should also contain trace minerals that are deficient in the area. Levels of trace minerals used in local cattle supplements can provide a guide for goats. A mineral supplement should be provided in the loose form to maximize consumption. The salt level in the mineral drives intake; therefore, no other sources of salt should be available. A mineral feeder should be used to protect from rain and keep the supplement clean. Replenish minerals frequently to keep them fresh.

Current approximate wholesale costs for supplying 100% of mineral needs of a 150 lb goat for various minerals in 1 year are as follows:

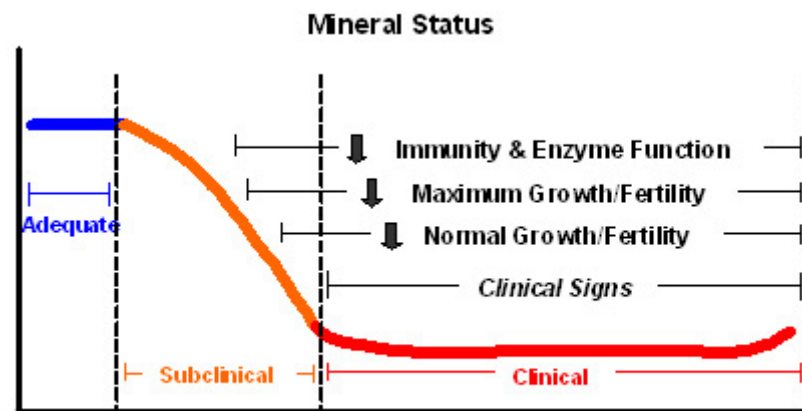
Calcium	\$1.15
Phosphorus	4.50
Salt	0.40
Magnesium	1.11
Potassium	1.50
Trace minerals	0.45
Other minerals	0.65
Total	9.70

Feedstuffs will normally provide at least half of all minerals and in some cases all required. It should be noted that phosphorus alone accounts for half the mineral cost.

### ***Diagnosing mineral deficiencies or toxicities***

The proper procedure for diagnosing a mineral deficiency or toxicity depends on which mineral is being considered. Secure the assistance of a local veterinarian and extension animal nutritionist in the state who are familiar with minerals in the region.

1. Deficiency or toxicity symptoms usually provide initial indications of mineral status (e.g., manganese and “knuckling over”). However, deficient animals do not always show classic symptoms and the major symptom may only be a ‘poor-doing’ animal.
2. Blood tests are adequate for some minerals such as magnesium, calcium, and phosphorus, and for other blood factors that give an indication of mineral status. Examples of these factors include: glutathione peroxidase for selenium, hemoglobin for iron, zinc binding protein for zinc, and thyroid hormones for iodine.
3. Hair analysis has been used for zinc and selenium but in general is a poor diagnostic test.
4. The liver is a good tissue to test for iron and copper adequacy. Liver samples can be obtained via biopsy or from animals that are slaughtered or die.



Effect of declining trace mineral status on animal performance

### *Take home lessons on mineral nutrition*

- The diet should contain adequate levels of calcium and phosphorus and have close to a 2:1 calcium to phosphorus ratio.
- Provide a free-choice loose mineral supplement with appropriate levels of calcium and phosphorus that contains trace minerals deficient in the region.
- Monitor intake of the mineral to make sure the animals are eating an appropriate amount.
- Avoid excessive feeding of any supplementation.

## **Body Condition Scoring**

The adequacy of a nutritional program can be assessed by observing changes in body weight and condition of the animal. If animals lose weight, body condition will be reduced (animal is thinner), alerting an observant manager to a problem. Body condition is particularly responsive to energy and protein adequacy.

Body condition scoring is a system of assigning a numerical score based on physical characteristics indicative of fatness. These include the amount of muscle and fat covering the spine in the loin area and ribs and fat pad at the sternum. Body condition scores range from 1 (very thin) to 5 (obese) in one-half score increments. Langston University has information on

the American Institute for Goat Research website describing [Body Condition Scoring of Goats](#) and [Examples of Body Condition Scores in Goats](#).

Animals should achieve a certain body condition during specific periods of the production cycle. For example, animals should have a body condition of at least 2.5 but no more than 4.0 at the beginning of the breeding season. Prior to entering the winter a minimum score of 3.0 is desirable. Also, if body condition score is 4.5 or greater, pregnancy toxemia prior to kidding is likely, as also is the case with a score of 2.0 or less.

## Using the Langston Interactive Nutrient Calculator

Practical goat nutrition involves providing sufficient nutrients for a desired level of productivity (milk, meat, or kids) at a reasonable cost. Nutrients are supplied via a combination of pastures, supplements, and other feedstuffs; adequate amounts are required for animals to produce to their genetic potential. For commercial meat goat production, the economics of nutrition are of paramount importance due to their great impact on cost of production and subsequent profit. For show, purebred, and companion goats, the economics of nutrition may be of lesser importance.

Applied nutrition involves determining nutrient requirements and then working with available feedstuffs, including pasture, hay, or supplemental feeds, to provide the required nutrients in proper amounts. Nutrient requirements are affected by an animal age, weight, and production type and stage. For example, pregnancy, number of fetuses, etc. will affect the amount of nutrients needed by a doe.

Calculating nutrient requirements by hand can be difficult, but the Langston Interactive Nutrient Calculator (LINC) makes the task easy, only requiring answering several questions. In addition, it is linked to a nutrient balancer program that allows selection and use of pastures and feeds to meet the requirements. The calculator will determine not only protein and energy requirements, but also calcium and phosphorus needs.

### *Getting started*

To teach you to use LINC, we will go through an example. Here is the assignment, calculate the nutrient requirements for a nonpregnant 3 year old mature ½ Boer-cross doe that had twins 6 weeks ago will be used. The doe has a 32 inch heartgirth and is under intensive grazing management. Her body condition score is 2.5

First, go to the Langston web site [www2.luresext.edu/goats/research/nutritionmodule1.htm](http://www2.luresext.edu/goats/research/nutritionmodule1.htm).

**Question 1** asks the biotype of goat. A drop down menu will give the choices of Boer, Boer cross, Spanish or indigenous (native) goat, dairy goat, or Angora goat. For Kiko goats, use the selection for Spanish and indigenous. Select “Boer cross.”

**Question 2** asks the class of goat, and selections include suckling, growing goat less than a year and a half of age, mature goat including late gestation, and lactating goat including meat and



dairy goats. If a lactating goat is selected, another drop down menu asks information needed to predict milk production. This information includes litter size (number of kids), week of lactation (weeks since she kidded), and age of doe at kidding in years. Milk production, along with fat and protein percentages, are then predicted. These figures can be edited, which is useful for dairy goat producers who are more likely to know the amount of milk produced and its fat and protein contents.

For the example, select “lactating goat”. Then in the subsequent menu, select the number of kids (twins) and input week of lactation (6) and age at kidding (2 - 3 years). The program predicts that the doe will produce 3.6 lbs of milk containing 3.6% fat and 3.3% protein.

**Question 3** asks the gender of the goat, and the drop down menu has choices of doe, buck, and wether. Select “doe.”

**Question 4** asks the body weight of the goat. If the weight is known or a good estimate is available, it should be entered in the box. If the weight is unknown, the heartgirth (chest circumference) can be measured to predict body weight. Check the box to estimate weight via heartgirth and enter heartgirth in inches. A menu will appear with choices of genotype (breed) of goat (Alpine, Angora, Boer, ½ or less Boer, ¾ or 7/8 Boer, La Mancha, Nigerian dwarf, Oberhasli, Saanen, Toggenberg, and Spanish). Some breeds require input of body condition score. Body weight is then estimated. Input “32” inches for a “½ or less Boer” and the estimated weight of the doe is 105 lbs. This can be used for estimating bodyweight for medicine dosage or weights for management purposes.

**Question 5** asks the desired amount of weight gain or loss expected in a 1 month period, with selections ranging from losing 5 pounds (-5) to gain of 30 pounds. This gain is in addition to any pregnancy weight gain. Select 0 lbs per month.

**Question 6** adjusts nutrient requirements for the energy expended during grazing if goats have access to pasture. The drop down menu includes choices of stable feeding, intensive management, semi-arid grazing (goats on extensive ranges), and arid (desert) grazing. For the sample calculation select “intensive management, temperate or tropical range.” This selection will be used in all the examples that follow.

**Question 7** asks the percentage TDN of the diet being fed and uses a default value of 60. If the TDN level in the feed is known, this value can be adjusted. For dairy goats, the default value is 65%. Use the default of 60%. If you know the value of the feed you plan to use put it in here. This value is important in prediction of intake.

**Question 8** asks the percent protein in the diet and the default is 10%. For dairy goats, the default is 14%. Use the default of 10%. If you know the value of the feed you plan to use, put it in here. This value is used to help predict intake.

**Calculate Requirements** Click on the button to calculate the energy and protein requirements, estimated dry matter intake, and calcium and phosphorus requirements. In this example, the

requirements should be 2.5 lbs of TDN for energy, 0.34 lbs of crude protein, 6.65 grams of calcium, and 4.65 grams of phosphorus, with a predicted intake of 3.65 lbs of dry matter.

### ***Providing needed nutrients***

After calculating the nutrient requirements for goats, those nutrients must be provided using feedstuffs such as pasture, hay, concentrate, and minerals. For most goats throughout much of the year, nutrient requirements can be met by available pasture, a mineral supplement, and water. During times of limited forage availability or quality such as winter, or feeding poor quality hay or stockpiled forage, a supplement will be needed to supply deficient nutrients. The level of supplemental feeding should be adjusted with changes in animal requirements, such as increased needs of late pregnancy. Sometimes it may be preferable to put an animal in a lot and feed a complete diet or one high in concentrate such as with dairy goats.

There may be periods when nutrient requirements cannot be met, resulting in loss of body weight. This is acceptable at certain times in the production cycle if body condition is sufficient to draw upon body reserves and maintain the desired production level. An example would be weight loss during early lactation because sufficient nutrients cannot be consumed. However if the doe is in poor body condition, is a growing yearling, or has severe weight loss during this time, milk production will be depressed. During a drought, it may be acceptable for open or early pregnant animals that are not lactating to lose weight. During late pregnancy, inadequate nutrition can have adverse effects on pregnancy outcome and subsequent lactation. We can estimate what the projected bodyweight losses would be by reducing the bodyweight gains in question five and then calculating nutrient requirements until the energy and protein requirements match intake of those nutrients. Severe undernutrition can cause abortion, reduced livability of the kid(s), reduced milk production and adversely affect maternal behavior.

## **Feeding Different Classes of Goats**

The feeding suggestions that follow are oriented to commercial goat producers. Purebred, show, and companion animals are often fed more for larger frames and better body condition, but excessive body condition can be deleterious to the animal health.

### ***Feeding bucks***

Mature bucks can obtain most of their nutrients from pasture. However, yearling and 2 year old bucks have greater nutrient requirements since they are still growing. Bucks need to be in good body condition (BCS greater than 3) before the breeding season because feed intake may be relatively low during that time, with loss of body weight. Thus, body condition should be evaluated 3 months before the breeding season. Decisions can then be made on the supplemental nutrition needed for the buck to achieve the desired BCS.

Whenever bucks cannot meet nutritional needs from pasture, supplementation is necessary. Under most conditions, whole shelled corn or sweet feed at 0.25 to 0.5% of body weight will be adequate (0.5 to 1 lb of feed for a 200 lb buck). Feeding bucks high levels of grain (greater than

1.5% of body weight) for a long period of time makes them prone to urinary calculi. The levels of grain recommended above are safe for bucks. When pasture is scarce, bucks can be fed medium quality hay free-choice (all they can eat).

Using LINC, calculate the nutrient requirements for a 3 year old, 200 lb Boer-cross buck, gaining no weight, and on pasture (intensive management). The calculated requirements are 2.39 lbs of TDN, 0.26 lbs of crude protein, 5.05 grams calcium, and 4.09 grams phosphorus, with predicted dry matter intake of 3.55 lbs. However, it is important to note that the estimated dry matter intake is influenced by the dietary TDN and CP concentration inputs. Therefore, if the default values are used and a forage, which makes up all or most of the total diet other than a mineral supplement, has different levels, then the predicted dry matter intake may not be close to the actual amount. In the example above, default values were assumed. To determine if these nutrient requirements can be met by native range with a mineral supplement, click on “Select Feed Ingredients” at the bottom of the page. A page listing different feeds will appear. In the “Forages” section below “Concentrates,” click on “range, early summer,” and under “Minerals” choose a 12-12 mineral supplement. Go to the bottom and click on “Input These Feed Ingredients into the Ration.”

The ration window will appear that lists each ingredient chosen. Intake figures should be entered in the column labeled “Amount, lbs as fed.” The estimated intake for this buck is 3.55 lbs *dry matter* (lbs of diet not including the water content of the feedstuffs), whereas in this window the consumption amount is entered as the “*as fed*” form. Because feedstuffs vary in water content (compare the water content of fresh, green pasture to the same forage dried and harvested as hay), nutrient requirements and intake estimations are calculated on a “*dry matter basis*.” Dry matter basis means that all water has been removed. However, animals eat feed in an “*as-fed*” form. This calculator will determine the amount of dry matter intake for each ingredient from the as-fed figures entered. This relieves the producer from having to estimate dry matter, allowing the amount fed to the animal to be entered, with the program performing the needed dry matter calculations.

The mineral supplement bag predicts intake of 0.5 to 1 lb/month/hundred lbs of body weight. At that rate, the 200 lb buck will consume 2 lbs/month or 0.067 lbs/day (2 lbs ÷ 30 days), roughly 1 ounce. Some supplements estimate an intake such as 1 to 1.5 oz/day, but this can vary with the size of the goat. Enter 0.07 lbs for the mineral. Therefore, in this example it can be assumed that forage dry matter intake is 3.55 lbs. The value of 3.55 is entered into the “Amount, as-fed” column for range forage. Clicking in the “Amount, lbs DM” column will calculate the amount of DM and nutrients provided (Running total) compared with the Requirements. The amount of *as-fed* native range grass provided should be increased until the forage dry matter provided equals the 3.55 lbs previously calculated. This is done by trial and error method until a correct answer is found. In this case, the correct amount is 3.95 lbs of as-fed native range, which will provide 3.55 lbs of dry matter. Therefore, the estimated daily ration for this buck is 3.95 lbs of native range grass hay, or an equivalent amount of pasture, on a dry matter basis plus 0.07 lbs of mineral per day.

Comparing the Running total with the Requirements shows that this diet did not meet the requirement for TDN (2.12 lbs provided vs a requirement of 2.39; 89%). Crude protein, calcium, and phosphorus are supplied in excess of requirements. Because the equations used in these predictions include a small safety margin (i.e., requirements are most likely slightly greater than actual), if the deficiency is not marked the diet could be used as is with careful monitoring of performance measures, most notably BCS. In addition, one should consider that the diet actually consumed could be higher in quality than the 'book' composition values used. In this regard, when taking plant samples, plants are often cut at the ground level, such as for hay. Conversely, goats select certain plant parts (especially leaves) that have higher nutrient contents. Therefore, the composition analysis used in the calculations might not have matched what was actually eaten. For example, if a TDN concentration in consumed forage of 65% and a crude protein level of 12% are assumed, the predicted TDN intake is 95% of that necessary to satisfy the TDN requirement.

Accurate and abundant data on the nutrient content of plant parts consumed by goats are lacking. When hay is fed and animals are 'forced' to consume most of it, the hay analysis will closely match what is consumed. The same applies to supplemental feeds that are totally consumed. One way to more accurately determine the true composition of diets of grazing goats is to follow the animals for a couple of hours and hand pluck the portions of plants consumed and send the sample in for analysis. However, plant composition and plant parts selected vary over time, making it desirable to sample plants monthly or more frequently.

In the absence of feed nutrient analysis, it is important to try to match the description of feeds or pasture as closely as possible to that in the LINC feed tables. If actual analysis has been determined, it can be entered into LINC at the bottom of the feed library. Information required includes concentrations of TDN, crude protein, calcium, and phosphorus. Hopefully in the future, more applicable data will be available for herbage grazed by goats.

### ***Feeding replacement bucks and does***

Replacement bucks and does must gain sufficient weight from weaning to breeding to be adequately large and sexually mature. A Spanish doe weaned at 12 weeks of age would be expected to weigh 40 lbs and gain 5 lbs per month to achieve a minimum breeding size of 60 lbs at 7 months of age. A Boer doe weaned at 12 weeks of age would be expected to weigh 50 lbs and would need to gain 7.5 lbs per month to be 80 lbs at breeding. These are minimum weights, and it is advantageous for animals to be slightly heavier. Some purebred breeders wait to breed their doelings at 19 months of age because a doe with a bigger frame size is desired. Most commercial goat producers cannot afford the cost of an extra year of maintaining an animal with no production.

Does will generally gain sufficient weight if an adequate amount of a moderate quality forage is available. If doelings are not gaining adequate weight (as measured by a scale or through the heartgirth conversion program), they could be supplemented with whole shelled corn at 0.5 to 1% of body weight per day (1/4 to 1/2 lb of corn per head per day for 50 lb doeling). Feeding excessive grain to does causes an overly fat condition. Fat may be deposited in the udder,

leading to reduced formation of milk secretory tissue. The doe is also more likely to have pregnancy toxemia and birthing problems. If sufficient good quality pasture is not available, growing doelings will need good quality hay and a supplement such as whole shelled corn, sweet feed, or range cubes or pellets at 0.5 to 1.0% of body weight.

Bucklings must gain more weight than doelings to reach puberty. While there are no available recommendations for weight of meat goat bucklings at first breeding, these animals need to reach an adequate size to achieve puberty. Like doelings, body condition should be monitored and supplemented at 0.5 to 1% of body weight per day (1/4 to 1/2 lb of corn per head per day for 50 lb buckling. Most bucks do not let a lack of body weight interfere with breeding, but some body reserves are necessary to maintain fertility and mating activity throughout the breeding season.

### ***Feeding does throughout their life cycle***

The four production periods of does are dry nonpregnant, pregnant, late gestation, and lactating. Does that are open (nonpregnant) or in the early stage of pregnancy (< 95 days) have fairly low nutrient requirements. For open does, the goal is to gain a little weight to be in good condition for breeding. A medium quality pasture, such as in late summer, or a medium quality hay is sufficient to prepare for breeding and the early stage of pregnancy. However, adequate quantities of feed are necessary.

Use the LINC to calculate the nutrient requirements for a 130 lb nonpregnant, mature Boer doe without change in body weight and with intensive pasture grazing. The requirements are 1.50 lbs of TDN, 0.18 lbs of crude protein, 4.03 grams of calcium, and 2.82 grams of phosphorus, with an estimated dry matter intake of 2.31 lbs (based on the composition of fall bermudagrass; 50% TDN and 9% CP). Feeds used are fall bermudagrass and a mineral supplement. A 130 lb doe is expected to consume the mineral at 0.1% of body weight per month = 1.3 lbs/30 days = 0.04 lbs of mineral per day. The estimated 2.31 kg dry matter intake of fall bermudagrass (3.25 lbs as-fed) provides 1.14 lbs of TDN (76% of requirement) and 0.20 lbs of crude protein (111% of requirement). In this example, it appears questionable as to whether or not body weight of the doe could be maintained with this forage (i.e., 50% TDN). The goat's ability to select higher quality plant parts, as noted above, might enable them to maintain their body weight. In this regard, if they are able to select a diet with a TDN concentration of 60% rather than 50% then the amount of TDN supplied is ( $2.86 \times 0.60 = 1.37$  lbs) which is 91% of the required amount, somewhat close to her requirements. Again, it is important to monitor body condition.

Calculate the nutrient requirements for a Boer doeling weighing 70 lbs, gaining 5 lbs per month, and with intensive pasture grazing, using LINC. The requirements are: 1.3 lbs TDN, 0.25 lbs crude protein, 2.98 grams of calcium, and 2.08 grams of phosphorus with a dry matter intake estimate of 2.06 lbs. If we adjust estimated TDN and estimated protein for the forage (questions 7 and 8 in LINC) since the 50% TDN of fall Bermudagrass is different than the 60% assumed, and use 9% CP instead of the 12% assumed, predicted dry matter intake is 2.32 lbs. Using the same feeds, fall bermudagrass and mineral, with a mineral consumption of 0.02 lbs (1% of body weight /month, divided by 30) and using fall bermudagrass for the remainder of her intake (3.3 lbs as fed), both TDN (1.16 lbs intake, 89% of requirement) and crude protein (0.21 lbs intake,

84% of requirement) are inadequate. To achieve the desired growth rate, supplementation may be necessary. By trying sweet feed as a third feedstuff it is determined, through trial and error, that 0.75 lbs of sweet feed along with 2.0 lbs of fall pasture will provide most of the energy requirement but only 0.19 lbs of crude protein (76% of requirement), which is inadequate. By deleting the sweet feed and changing to a 16% dairy ration to supply the needed crude protein, it is finally determined that 0.75 lbs of a 16% crude protein dairy ration, 2.0 lbs pasture, and 0.02 lbs of mineral will provide 1.3 lbs of TDN (100% of requirement) and 0.25 lbs of protein (100% of requirement). The weight gain to achieve adequate breeding size should continue to be monitored with possible feeding adjustments made. The lesson here is that this doeling, because of the need for growth, has higher requirements than a mature doe and needs extra nutrition.

### ***Flushing meat goats***

Some people advocate “flushing” of meat goats prior to breeding. Flushing refers to the practice of providing extra nutrition to does approximately 2 weeks prior to breeding and for a variable portion of the breeding period (e.g., 1-2 weeks) to increase the number of ovulations and have a greater proportion of twins. This is widely advocated with sheep producers and Angora goat producers. Producers have extrapolated the practice to meat goats. However, several controlled studies with Spanish goats in reasonable body condition (BCS 2.5 - 3.5) have shown no response in kidding or conception rate of meat goats to flushing with extra protein, energy, or both. The practice may have utility for meat goats in poor body condition, but there does not appear to be justification for flushing does in acceptable body condition.

### ***Winter feeding of does***

Early to mid-winter is a time when does should be in early pregnancy. The goal of a wintering program is to economically provide the necessary nutrients to maintain a reasonable body condition, lose no weight, and keep them warm. In general, most wintering programs consist of both forage and supplement components. The forage component can consist of hay, stockpiled forage, or a cheap byproduct roughage feed. The supplement usually contains energy, protein, and often vitamins and minerals, although these may be provided separately as a mineral mix. Commonly utilized supplements include whole shelled corn (inexpensive source of energy), range cubes (inexpensive source of energy and protein), sweet feed, protein blocks, molasses blocks or tubs, and liquid feed.

Stockpiled forage is forage that is grown during the summer or fall upon which animals are not allowed to graze, reserving it for the winter months. In drier areas, the forage is well preserved, but in a more humid climate quality declines rapidly, making the practice less satisfactory. Stockpiled forage is a very inexpensive forage source since it does not have to be mechanically harvested (baling forage doubles the cost of forage); animals harvest stockpiled forage by grazing. Animals make much more efficient use of stockpiled forage when strip grazed (using temporary electric fence to limit animal access to an area containing a 1 to 3 day supply of forage) to minimize trampling. Fescue is used in many temperate states for stockpiling and retains its quality well into late winter even in humid areas. Most recommendations for stockpiling fescue include late summer fertilization, clipping, and deferred grazing. Warm

season grasses such as native range and Bermudagrass can be stockpiled. The amount of deterioration is dependent on grass species and rain. If local cattlemen are using stockpiled forage it will probably work for certain classes of meat goats. Consult your state forage extension specialist for further information.

Calculate the requirements for wintering a 95 lb mature Kiko doe (use Spanish biotype) in early pregnancy gaining no weight and with intensive pasture grazing, using LINC. The requirements are 1.19 lbs TDN, 0.14 lbs protein, 3.13 grams of calcium, and 2.19 grams of phosphorus, with 1.86 lbs of dry matter intake estimated (based on default dietary TDN and CP levels). Feedstuffs that can be used include stockpiled (winter) bermudagrass and a 16% molasses lick. The estimated intake from the molasses lick label is 4 ounces or 0.25 lbs. Assume the remainder of dry matter intake is from the stockpiled bermuda pasture.

The molasses lick is not in the feed library so must be entered manually as a new feedstuff. Click on “Add/Delete Ingredient to Feed Library,” to bring up a table to be filled out. First, the feedstuff class is selected. This molasses lick is in the “concentrate” class. Then the name “16% molasses lick” is entered, and remaining values are entered. These values can be obtained from the feedstuff tag or label or by calling the manufacturer. If a value is unknown, leave it blank. For this example, enter dry matter of 85%, 16% crude protein, 75% TDN, 2.8% calcium, and 0.45 % phosphorus. Click on “Add Feed Ingredient to Library” and the Select Feed Ingredient page appears. If needed, click on refresh feed library and 16% molasses lick appears under “Your Feed Ingredient Library.” If you have a dry hay or feed, 85% dry matter is a good assumption.

To continue formulating the ration, select the 16% molasses lick and winter bermudagrass, then click on “Input these Feed Ingredients to the Ration.” Enter 0.25 lbs for the 16% molasses lick under the “Amount, as-fed” column and guess at 1.5 lbs of winter bermudagrass. Through trial and error a total of 2.0 lbs bermudagrass is selected to fulfill intake requirement. The table shows that this diet provides 0.91 lbs of TDN (76% of requirement), 0.12 lbs CP (86% of requirement), 4.74 grams of calcium, and 1.52 grams of phosphorus (deficient). The diet is quite deficient in energy. To provide additional energy, add whole shelled corn. The diet is then reformulated to contain 0.6 lbs whole shelled corn, 1.4 lbs winter bermudagrass, and 0.25 lbs of lick molasses. This provides 1.15 lbs TDN (97% of the energy requirement) and meets the CP needs. Phosphorus is slightly deficient (13%), but if the bermudagrass is better than average the requirement can be satisfied. Mineral supplements vary in their phosphorus levels as phosphorus is an expensive ingredient. If a mineral supplement with a high phosphorus level is selected for feeding, the requirement would be met but likely at a high monetary cost.

### ***Feeding does in late gestation***

Energy requirements increase dramatically in late pregnancy (Figure 4). Using LINC, calculate the nutrient requirements for a 130 lb mature Boer doe, 140 days pregnant (10 days from kidding), gaining no weight, other than that due to pregnancy, and carrying twins. Under question 3, after clicking on the box for greater than 95 days pregnant, a form drops down for pregnancy number (twins), breed (predicts birth weight, can enter yours if known), and days of

pregnancy (140). The requirements are 2.45 lbs TDN, 0.45 lbs crude protein, 3.97 lbs intake, 6.03 grams calcium, and 4.22 grams phosphorus.

A ration can be balanced using bermudagrass hay and 20% range cubes to meet the requirements by feeding 1.5 lbs of range cubes and 3.0 lbs of bermudagrass hay. This illustrates the high level of nutrition that is needed, especially in the last 3 weeks of pregnancy. High quality hay as well as supplementation is usually required. The range cubes contain a mineral supplement so an additional mineral mixture is needed.

Doelings require more supplementation than mature does, as the doelings are still growing. The nutrient requirements for a 95 lb growing Boer doeling with a predicted intake of 3.37 lbs, gaining 1 lb per month in addition to pregnancy weight gain and 140 days pregnant with a single kid are 1.77 lbs TDN, 0.36 lbs CP, 5.23 grams calcium, and 3.66 grams of phosphorus. If the same ingredients are used as those for the mature doe, how much of each will be required? The doeling could be fed 3.8 lbs of bermudagrass hay alone to meet the nutrient requirements for pregnancy with a single kid. However, if the doeling is carrying twins and is 140 days pregnant, her requirements are 2.27 lbs TDN and 0.47 lbs CP. This doeling will require 1.0 lbs of range cubes and consume 3.3 lbs of hay. If an abundance of high quality pasture is not available, the doeling will need some type of supplementation. If the forage (or hay) of adequate quality is available, only 1 to 1.5% of body weight of whole shelled corn may be needed as an energy supplement. This is important in that feed intake may be reduced in the last 4 to 6 weeks of gestation by the growing kids that reduce available abdominal space.

### ***Feeding the lactating doe***

The lactating doe has very high nutrient requirements. Calculate the requirements for a 4 year old 110 lb Boer-cross doe nursing twins in week 4 of lactation. When lactating is selected under question #2 on LINC, a form drops down. Select litter size (twins), week of lactation (4), and age at kidding (4). The program then predicts production of 4.5 lbs of milk per day with 3.6% fat and 3.3% crude protein. Nutrient requirements are 2.8 lbs of TDN, 0.41 lbs of protein, 7.61 g of calcium, and 5.33 grams of phosphorus, with 4.14 lbs of dry matter intake predicted (based on default dietary TDN and CP concentrations). During lactation, the doe can consume nearly enough nutrients if an abundant supply of high quality pasture is available, such as in spring or early summer. However, does will likely lose some bodyweight due to the high demands of peak lactation (weeks 3 to 8 of lactation) and an inability to consume an adequate quantity of feed. Kidding should take place when there is an adequate supply of high quality pasture. If there is not adequate pasture, supplemental feed will be required. Inadequate nutrition will decrease body condition and reduce milk production and kid weaning weight.

If feeding bermudagrass hay and a 16% dairy ration, 2.6 lbs of hay and 2.0 lbs of the ration are required to fulfill requirements. However, the doe will still lose 2.0 lbs of bodyweight per month. When feeding high levels of grain such as the amount in this example, the animal should go through an adjustment period of two to three weeks during which time the grain portion of the diet is gradually increased to prevent digestion and other problems from occurring. Feeding a dairy ration and hay to a doe during late gestation and the lactating period will cost



approximately \$30 per animal. Utilizing available pasture as a feed source is a much cheaper alternative.

Kids are usually weaned at about 12 weeks of age. Milk production of the doe begins to decrease after the 6<sup>th</sup> week of lactation and is quite low by the 12th week. Nutrient requirements decline as stage of lactation advances, enabling the doe to maintain body condition or even increase it on pasture alone. Kids may be creep fed while nursing to increase growth rate of the kids and reduce nutrient demands on the doe for milk production.

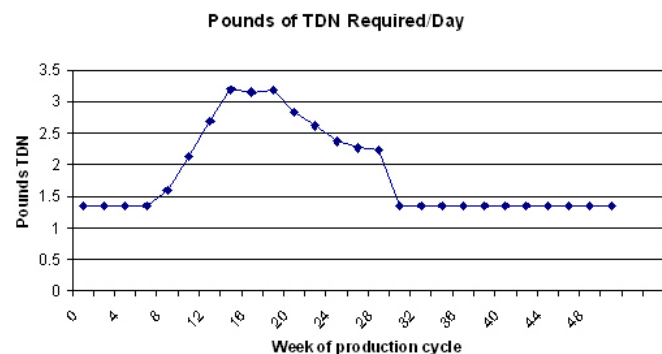
### *Creep feeding*

Creep feeding is a method of providing feed for the kids only. This is accomplished by fencing around a feeder and using a creep gate that has holes about 5 inch wide by 1 ft high. These holes are small enough so that kids can enter the feeder, but adults are excluded because they are too big to go through the hole. Creep feeding will provide extra growth for the kids and train them to eat feed, facilitating weaning. A commercial creep feed with at least 16% crude protein that is medicated with a coccidiostat should be used. It requires about 6 lbs of feed to produce 1 lb of animal gain. The more rapid growth from creep feeding may be beneficial for producing show prospects.

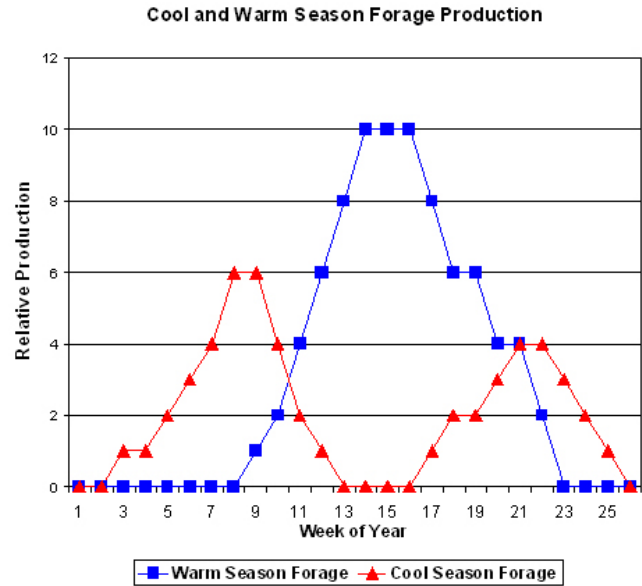
An alternative to grain-based creep feeds that is used in the beef cattle industry is to creep graze calves, using a creep gate that allows calves access to ungrazed high quality pasture. This may have application for goats using high quality pastures (crabgrass or sudangrass that is planted for the kids). In rotational grazing of cattle, the calves are often allowed to creep graze the next pasture before cows so that they have relatively high nutrient intake. Those pastures often have less parasites and disease organisms because of the time since last grazing.

## **Effect of Kidding Season on Nutrient Requirements**

Nutrient requirements of does change dramatically with stage of production. Requirements increase dramatically the last 6 weeks of gestation due to increasing fetal growth and remain high in early lactation (kidding occurred on week 20 in chart). During the month prior to kidding and for the following 3 months (assuming weaning at 12 weeks of age), the doe will consume nearly as much nutrients as in the remaining 8 months of the production cycle. Thus, during that time it makes sense to supply nutrients from an inexpensive source, typically pasture. The cost of providing the same nutrients as hay is more than twice that of pasture, and supplying through purchased feeds may be four to five times greater than for pasture.



Kidding should be planned for a time when pasture is rapidly growing. This period corresponds to late spring for pastures comprised of warm season forages such as bermudagrass or native range, browse, and forbs, but could be either fall or early spring for cool season grasses such as ryegrass, wheat, orchardgrass, and fescue. Cool season grasses usually produce less forage per acre than warm season forages, but generally are higher in energy and protein. The accompanying figure shows the relative production of cool and warm season forages for central Oklahoma. Consult a local pasture extension specialist or livestock extension specialist for local forage growth patterns. Rapidly growing pasture is high in protein and energy. A major consideration in determining the date to kid is level of forage production at that time. However, there are other considerations in selecting kidding date, such as parasites and market opportunities. Some markets provide a substantial price premium from kidding at a specific time of the year, such as producing prospect show wethers or registered animals. However, it may take a considerable market premium to cover the cost of purchased feed, so general reliance on pastures and forages is best.



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### Artificial Raising of Kids

Sometimes it is necessary to bottle feed young kids due to death of the mother or the mother refusing to take them. Milk feeding of commercial meat goats is usually not economical. It may be avoided by cross-fostering kids onto another doe as described under the goat management section. If a bottle raised kid is with other kids and does, they may learn to ‘steal’ sufficient milk to raise themselves. Kids can be raised on cow milk replacer, goat milk replacer (expensive) or, if none is available, cow milk from the store may be used.

It is very important that kids receive colostrum within 12 hours of birth. After 12 hours, antibodies absorption decreases. Colostrum may be milked from another doe that recently kidded. Colostrum contains antibodies that strengthen the immune system for the first months of life. A kid should be fed one ounce of colostrum per lb of weight (average birthweight 7 lbs, therefore, 7 ounces of colostrum) at each of three feedings in the first 24 hours. If the kid is too weak to nurse, it is appropriate to provide the colostrum via stomach tube. This does take some practice, but obtaining colostrum is critically important to kid survival.

Initially kids can be fed using a baby bottle or a nipple such as the Pritchard teat which fits on a plastic soda bottle. Kids can be bottle fed twice a day, although three times a day the first 4 to 6 weeks of life may increase growth rate. Kids are very susceptible to bloating and other

gastrointestinal problems from milk replacers that contain a high level of lactose due to use of dried whey in their formulation. Reduced lactose milk replacers will reduce bloating problems.

A calf starter feed (with a coccidiostat such as Rumensin or Deccox, sometimes called medicated) and high quality hay should be made available the second week of life. Deccox can be used in the milk from week 2-6 to prevent coccidiosis. After 4 weeks of life, kids can be limit fed milk at pint in the morning and also in the afternoon. This will stimulate consumption of starter feed and facilitate weaning.

Kids can be weaned after 8 weeks of age if they are consuming 2 ounces of starter per day and weigh two and a half times their birth weight (about 18 lbs). Weaning shock can be reduced by going to once a day milk feeding for several days to encourage consumption of the starter.

### **Considerations in Ration Formulation**

Rations should be balanced not only for protein and energy, but calcium and phosphorus contents should be calculated, macrominerals supplemented, and a trace mineralized salt used to provide microminerals. A vitamin premix should be used to provide at least vitamin A and E. If the diet is being fed at high levels to bucks or wethers, there is risk of urinary calculi. To prevent urinary calculi, the ration should be formulated with a minimum of phosphorus, over twice as much calcium as phosphorus, and a urine acidifier such as ammonium chloride at 0.5-1.0 % of the diet. Salt can also be included in the diet, such as at 1%, to reduce incidence of urinary calculi.

If the ration is being fed at high levels, sufficient fiber should be included in the diet to prevent acidosis. Dried brewers yeast and probiotics are often used in rations fed to animals at high levels to help prevent them from going off feed.

Feeds may have a coccidiostat included in the formulation to prevent coccidiosis. There are a number of coccidiostats, but Food and Drug Administration approved drugs commonly used include Deccox and Rumensin. Since goats are very susceptible to coccidiosis when stressed, such as at weaning or shipping, many starters and show feeds contain coccidiostats and have the term 'medicated' on the feed tag. Management considerations to reduce coccidiosis incidence include sanitation, cleanliness, and dry housing.

### **Feeding Systems**

There are many methods of feeding goats. Feeds should be offered in such a way to minimize mold growth or fecal contamination that reduces intake. Mineral mixes must remain dry and should be replenished at 2 week intervals to avoid caking. Feed troughs should be designed to facilitate removal of feces and leftover feed. Troughs generally require a bar running above the length of the trough to keep goats from defecating in them.

Self feeders can be used for feeds containing sufficient roughage for use as a complete feed or for feed that has a built-in intake limiter. For large range operations, feeds such as whole shelled

corn or range pellets or cubes are often fed on the ground. The feeding area is moved each day to have clean ground upon which to feed.

Hay should be fed in a rack off the ground. Feeding hay bales on the ground results in hay wastage and leaves a mess that is difficult to clean. Hay can be fed in a manger or hay feeder with keyhole slots, but horns may cause problems preventing access to feed. For large operations, unrolling round bales on the ground works well.

Further information on goat feeding systems can be found in the [Goat Facilities](#) module.

## Nutritional Disorders

There are several diseases associated with nutritional management. These include *acidosis*, *founder*, *enterotoxemia*, *pregnancy toxemia/ketosis*, *polioencephalomalacia*, and *urinary calculi*.

*Acidosis*, *founder*, and *enterotoxemia* are all related to either feeding high levels of grain or a rapid increase in the level of grain in the diet. Acidosis is associated with the production of high levels of lactic acid in the rumen from a large supply of starch that the animal consumed. Endotoxins may also be produced by ruminal bacteria that exacerbate the problem.

*Founder* refers to problems that occur with the feet of the animal as a consequence of acidosis. The blood vessels in the hoof constrict and in the long-term cause the hoof to grow rapidly, necessitating weekly hoof trimming.

*Enterotoxemia* is caused by bacteria in the intestine that grow rapidly and produce an endotoxin in response to high levels of starch (grain) in the diet. Animals are in extreme pain from the effect of the endotoxin and often die quickly. Vaccination will help prevent this disease.

High levels of grain in the diet and stress are associated with *polioencephalomalacia*, which is a thiamine deficiency. High dietary levels of sulfur (such as from molasses in the diet) can increase incidence of the condition. The animals appear drunk, may not be able to stand, become blind, and slowly die. There is often a dramatic response to a large dose of thiamine (5 mg/lb), which may need to be repeated. These diseases can be best prevented by increasing the grain level in the diet slowly and maintaining 50% forage in the diet.

*Pregnancy toxemia* is a metabolic disease usually caused by animals being too fat (body condition score greater than 4) prior to kidding; although very thin animals (body condition score less than 2) are subject to the disease also. It is caused by a high demand for nutrients by the growing fetus in late pregnancy that is not being met (excess fat in the body and the growing fetus limit room in the stomach for food, reducing intake of the diet). This unmet nutrient demand causes a rapid breakdown of fat reserves, forming ketone bodies at high levels which are toxic. Treatments include administration of propylene glycol, large doses of B vitamins, glucose given intravenously and possibly Caesarian-section (to remove the fetuses and immediately reduce energy demand; see the health section). Prevention of the disease is far easier and more effective than treatment. Simply monitor animal body condition and adjust nutrition, especially

energy, to manipulate body condition. Also, pregnant goats in the last third of pregnancy will need a more nutrient dense diet (higher quality) due to fetal growth and reduced intake because of reduced stomach capacity. Exercise will help. Does can be encouraged to exercise by separating hay, feed and water at a substantial distance, forcing them to walk more.

## Glossary

**Acidosis** - A disease usually caused by feeding too much grain or increasing the level of grain in the diet too rapidly. It results in the rumen having very acid conditions, and endotoxins may be produced that adversely affect various parts of the body.

**Body condition score** – Abbreviated BCS. Applying a numerical score to describe the amount of muscle and fat cover on an animal. Usually performed by feeling along the backbone in the loin area, over the ribs, and at the breastbone (sternum). Scores range from 1 (extremely thin) to 5 (extremely obese).

**Browse** - Vegetative parts of woody plants, primarily leaves and twigs, that typically contain high levels of tannins.

**Carbohydrates** - The major energy source found in most feedstuffs. Carbohydrates contain twice as many hydrogen atoms as carbon and as many oxygen atoms as carbon, commonly designated as CH<sub>2</sub>O. They include substances such as sugar, starch, fiber, cellulose, and hemicellulose.

**Cellulose** – A major structural carbohydrate in plants. A component of fiber that is poorly digested by nonruminant animals. Cellulose is composed of glucose molecules chemically linked by a “beta” linkage that is only digested by bacteria such as those in the rumen and(or) cecum.

**Coccidiosis** - An infectious intestinal disease caused by protozoan organisms (coccidia). The disease causes diarrhea and damages the lining of the intestine. Moisture, stress, and unsanitary conditions are conducive to coccidiosis.

**Concentrates** - A feed with less than 20% crude fiber and usually more than 60% TDN on an as fed basis. Often a mixture of feedstuffs with added minerals and vitamins.

**Crude fiber** – The more fibrous, less digestible portion of a plant primarily consisting of cellulose, hemicellulose, and lignin. A method of estimating the fiber content of a feedstuff through sequential extraction with acid and alkaline solutions.

**Enterotoxemia** - A disease caused by an overgrowth of bacteria (*Clostridia perfringens*) in the intestine usually due to fermentation of a large quantity of starch, with production of endotoxin. Usually causes rapid death of animals.

**Fiber** - A component of the feed that consists of cellulose, hemicellulose, and lignin. It is necessary for normal rumen health.

**Forage** - The edible part of the plant, other than separated grain, that can provide feed for grazing animals.

**Founder** - Refers to a consequence of acidosis, resulting in rapid growth of the hoof.

**Mineral** - The inorganic group of nutrients including elements such as calcium, phosphorus, copper, etc.

**Nutrient** – One of six classes of chemical compounds having specific functions in the nutritive support of animal life.

**Nutrient requirements** - The level of specific nutrients required to keep an animal healthy and productive.

**Nutrition** - The study of nutrients, determining what nutrients are required, what levels of nutrients are necessary for various levels of productivity, and how to provide those nutrients.

**Polioencephalomalacia, PEM, or 'polio'** - A neurological disease of goats caused by thiamine deficiency. The rumen normally produces adequate levels of thiamine, but under some conditions such as a high grain diet, high sulfur in the diet, stress, or being 'off feed,' the thiamine is degraded, thus causing the disease.

**Stockpiled forage** - Forage that is allowed to accumulate for grazing at a later time.

**Supplement** - A feed designed to provide nutrients deficient in the animal's main diet.

**TDN** - Total Digestible Nutrients, a measure of digested energy. A lb of TDN equals 2,000 Calories (kilocalories).

**Vitamins** - Specific organic substances required for various metabolic functions.

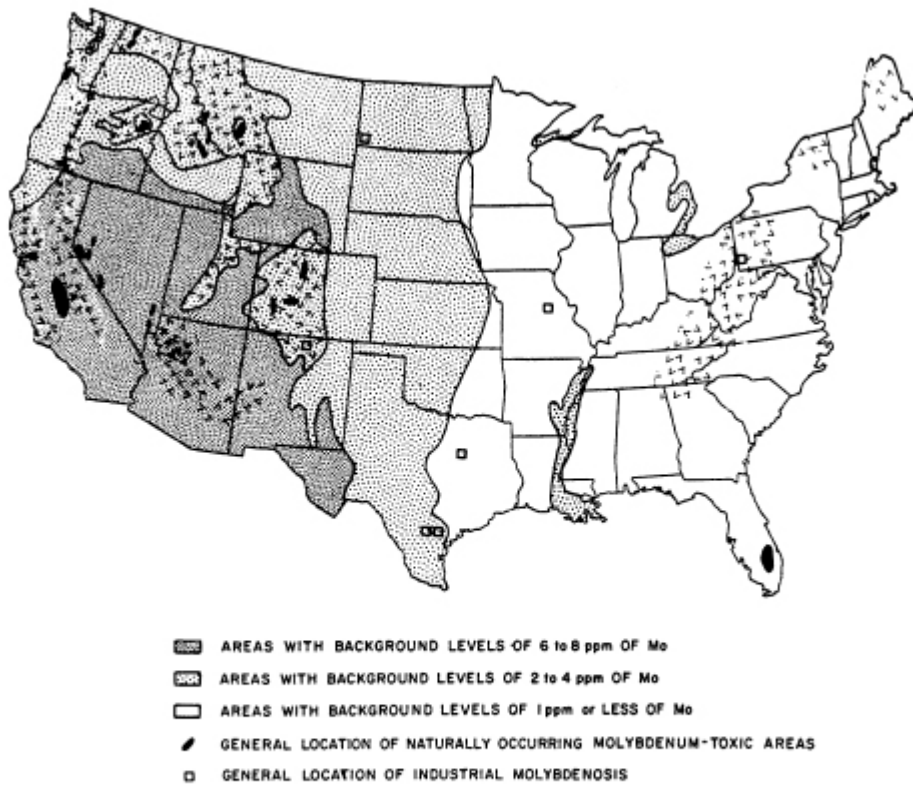
Soil-Related Nutritional Problem Areas for Grazing Animals

**Figure 1.** Geographical distribution of Co-deficient areas in the eastern United States (ppm =  $1 \mu\text{g/ g}^{-1}$ ). From Kubota and Alloway, 1972, by permission Soil Science Society of America.



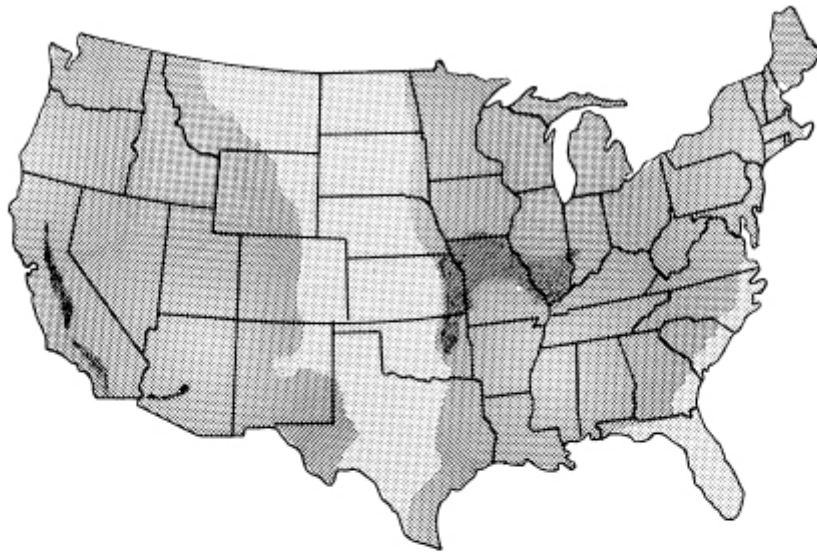
COBALT

- Areas where legumes usually contain less than 0.07 ppm of cobalt.
  - ▨ Areas where legumes usually contain from 0.05 to 0.1 ppm of cobalt.
- Grasses generally contain less than 0.10 ppm of cobalt throughout most of the U.S.



**Figure 6.** Generalized regional pattern of molybdenum concentration in legumes of the United States (ppm =  $1 \mu\text{g}/\text{g}^{-1}$ ). From Kubota, 1977, by courtesy Marcel Dekker, Inc.





AREAS WHERE 50% OR MORE OF LEGUMES HAVE 10-12+ PPM OF COPPER

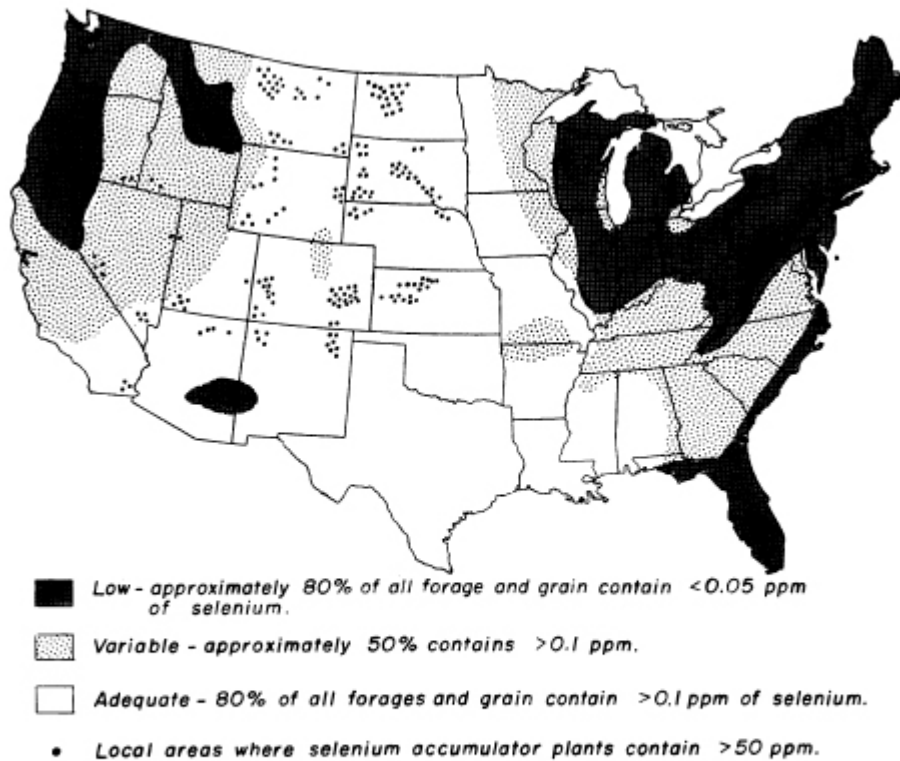


AREAS WHERE 40-70% OF LEGUMES HAVE 6-10 PPM OF COPPER



AREAS WHERE 35% OR MORE OF LEGUMES HAVE 6 PPM OR LESS OF COPPER

**Figure 7.** Generalized distribution of copper concentration in legumes of the United States (ppm =  $1 \mu\text{g}/\text{g}^{-1}$ ). From Kubota, 1983a, by permission Amer. Society of Agronomy.



**Figure 8.** Geographical distribution of low-, variable-, and adequate-Se areas in the United States (ppm = 1  $\mu\text{g/g}$ ). From Kubota and Allaway, 1972, by permission Soil Science Society of America.

*All soil maps were taken from Kubota, Welch, and Van Campen. 1987. Adv. Soil Sci. 6:189-215.*

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