

DIY Goat Health Exam

Here is an easy thorough method for examining a goat for potential health issues. You should do this with all goats you are considering for purchase, and for all goats coming to your farm for breeding or boarding too.

1. Check the ears for mites. Look for scale and debris in the ears, around the ears and below the ears.
2. Examine the eyes and membranes. First look at the open eye, note any cloudiness or excessive tears or drainage, any buildup of crust. Next examine the conjunctiva, the mucus membranes of the lower eyelid. To easily see the conjunctiva have someone restrain the goat, place the thumb of one hand over the closed eye and press inward on the eyeball while pulling the lower lid downward with the other thumb. Goats with pinkeye usually are squinting, have tearing eyes and red swollen conjunctiva, sometimes they have cloudy eyes. Goats with severe anemia for worms will have pale pink to white conjunctiva.
3. Check the nose for discharge. A clear thin discharge is probably okay if not excessive. Any discharge that is thick yellowish or greenish indicates infection. Dried discharge is also suspect.
4. Examine the lips and mouth. Look at the lips for scabs or sores possibly indicating soremouth. Bucks that frequently urinate on the faces may have some irritation around their nose and mouth; this is normal. Look at the teeth to determine if the goat has an under or overbite or if the bite is not square, the middle of the dental pad on top doesn't line up with the space between the middle incisors on the bottom.
5. Palpate the neck and jaw. Look under the lower jaw for abscesses at the back of the chin to the back of the jaw where it meets the throat. Look for abscesses or scars in the area just below the ears on the neck. Feel the rest of the neck by firmly running the hands from just under the jawbone down the neck to the shoulder joint. Feel for any bumps or thickening of the skin indicating a scar from a past abscess. Abscesses or scars found over areas where lymph nodes are found are suspect for CL. Not all abscesses are CL. Other bumps may be wattle cysts or salivary cysts, neither of which are contagious but may require surgery to fix.
6. Palpate the flank area just in front of the stifle and the area just below the perineum (at the top of the udder) for lumps that could be an abscess. Abscesses in these areas are suspect for CL.
7. Look for swollen knees which could indicate CAE.
8. Examine the skin over the withers, shoulders, down the back and down the flank for lice or nits. A Good flashlight makes this easier. Lice look like very small light brown or tan flat oval shaped insects. Nits are thin pale yellow eggs attached firmly to individual hairs. Look also for bare mostly circular crusty patches that may indicate ringworm, a fungal infection, ringworm can occur anywhere on the skin.
9. Look at the tail and perineum for signs of diarrhea. A doe with normal dried discharge from her heat cycles or a brownish discharge or stain from a recent kidding is okay.