

# STOMACH TUBING SICK GOATS

Written by: Suzanne W. Gasparotto

HC 70 Box 70

Lohn, TX 76852

Originally published in Goat Rancher Magazine

Be they kids or adult goats, there are times that the only way to keep them alive is to stomach tube nutritional supplements into their bodies. Producers need to have the necessary supplies on hand and also know how to use them when such an emergency arises.

Adults - Stomach tubing an adult goat is much easier than tubing a kid because the risk of threading the catheter (tube) into the lungs is less.

Purchase an adult livestock stomach tube (Jeffers Vet Supply, 1/2" outside diameter, 10 foot length of clear polyvinyl chloride vet tubing, under \$10.00 in the Livestock Catalog) and cut the base of a plastic funnel to fit over the end of the tubing. Using an 8-inch length of 1" PVC, file off the sharp edges, and store it with the stomach tube and funnel.

When a sick adult goat goes off-feed, it is difficult to individually syringe enough electrolytes and nutrients into it. Purchase some Entrolyte (oral calf nutrient powder made by Pfizer containing 13.24% crude protein in addition to electrolytes) and mix one of the packets with one-half gallon of warm water. Stomach tube the sick adult goat morning and night with this mixture until it begins eating on its own again.

To insert the stomach tube into the goat, have another person hold the animal steady. Place the short piece of PVC into the goat's mouth as far back as possible to prevent the goat from biting the soft tubing into pieces and swallowing it. If this occurs, surgery is required to remove the tubing so that the goat does not die. Before inserting the tubing, try to gauge how far it should go into the goat's body in order to reach the stomach. Uncurl the tubing and thread it through the PVC pipe. If you meet resistance, pull the tubing out and begin again. Before attaching the funnel, listen for a crackling/gurgling/popping sound which indicates you are in the stomach (and not in the lungs). Gently blow into the tube to obtain more sound feedback to further insure that you do not have the tube in the lungs. Attach the funnel and hold that end of the tubing as high as possible for good gravity flow. Make sure that the tubing is straight and uncured, then begin to pour the liquid into the funnel. If the fluid does not flow into the goat, pull the tube out a bit. . . . you've got it in too far. Check to make sure that the tubing is not kinked or twisted and that you have the funnel held high. When all of the liquid has been poured into the tube, wait several seconds before removing the tubing so that none enters the lungs as the catheter is withdrawn. Rinse the tubing, funnel, and PVC thoroughly and hang it to dry before it is needed again.

Kids - Stomach tubing newborn and young kids is more of a challenge than tubing adults because (a) they are harder to hold still without risking injury, (b) getting the catheter into the stomach and not the lungs is more difficult, and (c) it is easier to over-fill a kid's stomach and make the situation even worse. However, with some dexterity, one person can do it if no one else is available.

Purchase a Weak-Kid Syringe with accompanying stomach tube. Jeffers sells a 60 cc poly syringe with a long, flexible feeding tube for under \$5.00. Additional catheters are approximately one dollar each (you have to ask for them as they are not in the livestock catalog). Keep several extra stomach tubes on hand, as kids chew on them, causing them to lose what little rigidity that they have.

Whether stomach-tubing colostrum, milk, or electrolytes, the kid should be placed on its side on a counter, bench, or table, preferably on a soft towel, with its head towards the side from which the producer will be funneling the tube already attached to a weak-kid syringe. Measure the tube from the kid's mouth to the

approximate location of the stomach so you have some idea of how far to insert the tubing. Holding the head steady and controlling its body with your other forearm, carefully thread the tube into the kid's mouth and down the side (rather than down the center) of the throat. If you meet resistance, pull the tubing out and begin again. Use the same 'listening/gentle blowing into the syringe' technique before pouring liquid into the funnel. Do not pour into the funnel more than one ounce at a time and frequently pinch the tube with your fingers to stop the flow so that the kid is not overwhelmed. Remember that you are dealing with a weak/sick baby goat. The kid's head can be lifted from the counter to allow gravity to assist in the flow. It is difficult to hold a kid in the standing position while tubing it. Kids are very adept at expelling stomach tubes by spitting them up, so be careful to keep the correct amount of tubing inside the goat. As the tube comes out, fluid can enter the lungs. Pinch the tube and hold the pinch securely for several seconds before removing the tube. Keep the tube pinched until the entire catheter is out of the kid's body.

When tube feeding a weak or sick kid, limit the amount tubed at one time to two ounces (60 cc). Give the kid time to digest the liquids tubed into it. Because colostrum from some dams is very thick, it may be necessary to slightly thin it with regular goat's milk for proper flow through the stomach tube. Cut a length of thick stiff wire equal to the length of the stomach tube for use in unstopping the tube.

Here's a tip on how to tell if a kid is full or needs additional nutrition: Place the kid with all four feet on the ground and feel the abdomen in front of the back legs with both hands. The stomach should feel firm but not tight. If the kid's belly feels 'squishy,' then he needs more colostrum, milk, or whatever is being tubed or bottle-fed into him. If you perform this procedure by holding the kid off the ground, he will feel 'fuller' than he really is.

Do not tube milk or colostrum into a kid who cannot hold its head up. Use sugar and water mixtures (Karo syrup, molasses, or similar product) to give it energy until it can sit upright. See this writer's article entitled "Health Problems of Newborn and Weak Kids" on the website's Articles page for how to treat sick and weak kids.

Every producer must learn how to use stomach tubes on both adult and kid goats. Like so many things in life, it is easier to do than you think. One day a goat's life is going to depend upon your ability to use a stomach tube properly. So be prepared.

Added by Author on 4/13/07

Here is how I make an adult goat stomach tube: I take 5 feet of 1/2" OD by 5/16" ID clear vinyl tubing and file the ends smooth. I take 3 inches of 5/8" OD by 1/2" ID clear vinyl tubing, file the ends smooth, and put it on one end of the long tube. I get a 57 cent yellow plastic funnel from the Automotive Dept at WalMart and fit it onto the shorter, larger pieced end of the tubing (the 3" section). I cut an 8-1/2 inch length of 3/4" CPVC and file it off very smoothly on both ends. The piece of PVC goes in the goat's mouth. The long length of tube is passed through the PVC to keep the goat from biting the tubing and swallowing it when stomach tubed.

Addendum:

For Pygmy kids use a 12 or 14 French feeding catheter and do not feed more than 1 ounce (30 cc) at a time.

Kay Orlando,

DVM, Chair NPGA Health and Research Committee