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## Pet Goat Care for the Horse Owner

Goats make great pets and many horse owners keep a goat to provide companionship for their horses. They are very social animals, so it's best to keep two together or make sure that your horse and goat get along. While goats are relatively low maintenance animals, there are a few things that you should know:

- **Housing-** Goats need shelter from wind, rain and snow, but should not be housed in an air tight barn. In general they have the same housing requirements as your horse.
- **Feed-** Pet goat diets should primarily consist of forage. During the summer this may be entirely pasture, but in the winter a good quality grass or grass/alfalfa mix hay is best. This can be the same hay that your horses get and should be clean, free of mold and fed in a hay rack off the ground. Goats like to climb into their feeders! Since goats are "browsers" instead of "grazers", they also enjoy eating leaves, flowers, and shrubs. So, if you don't want it eaten, keep the goats fenced away! Your discarded Christmas tree makes a nice winter treat as well as trimmed branches from trees or shrubs. But be careful not to feed trimmings from Japanese yew, Azaleas, Rhododendron, Oleander, potatoes, or rhubarb. A general horse grain mix is OK to feed to your goat, but should be in very limited amounts up to 1 lb. per day. Obesity is a problem and most pet adult goats need little to no grain. A small amount as a daily treat is acceptable. Your goat should also have free choice access to a trace mineral block or loose mineral. Again, a horse mineral block is OK.
- **Health Care-** Pet goats require little in the way of preventative health care. Hooves should be checked and trimmed at least every other month. A yearly vaccination to protect against Enterotoxemia and tetanus should be given. Internal parasites can be a problem for young goats, but in general a single or pair of adult goats will have few problems. A yearly fecal exam in the spring, done at the same time as your horse, will check the level of infestation. Horses and goats do not share any internal parasites. A common problem for castrated male goats (wethers) is urolithiasis or urinary stones. This is most often caused by feeding a diet too rich in phosphorus. To help prevent this problem, keep the feeding of grain and rich alfalfa hay to a minimum, keep plenty of clean unfrozen water available and offer free choice white salt to encourage water consumption. Ammonium chloride fed at a rate of ¼ oz. per day can be used as a preventative, but is very unpalatable.

Your veterinarian can vaccinate and examine your goat during your horses' yearly exam and collect a fecal sample at that time. If you have more in depth needs, we have veterinarians on staff that focus on small ruminant health care.