When raising goats, there are a few things to be watching for, especially pertaining to their overall health. One very common problem to watch for is parasites. All goat breeds, meat goats or dairy goats, are susceptible to parasites. The term parasite is just a general term for organisms which are usually worms. Worming goats is a lot like worming dogs, except goats won’t sit down and scoot their butt across the carpet. You will need to use other methods in determining if your goats have worms or not. Some goat breeders worm their goats on a regular basis, usually twice a year in the spring and in the fall, to account for worms so they won’t have to check their goats. The downside to this method is that the worms will build up a resistance to the wormer medication if it is used too frequently. This will make the medication not work near as effectively as it used to, or sometimes not at all. The best method is to look at the goat’s gums and the inside of their eyelid. This normally pink flesh will be white when the goat has worms. Their flesh is white there because the worms are blood-sucking parasites. (literally!) The worms attach themselves to the lining of the stomach and digestive system and feed on the blood. This becomes a problem when there are too many parasites and the animal becomes weakened because of blood loss, lower immune system, or even get an infection because of the worms.

How to check for worms

Get the goat into a headlock or restrain it some other way. Take the goats muzzle in your hands and while keeping the goats head as still as possible, pull their upper or bottom lip out and check the gums and the inside of their lip. The other place to check is inside their eyelids. This method of looking for evidence of worms is a little trickier. Take the goats head and turn it toward you so you can plainly see its eye. Take your thumb and gently close their eye and push very gently on their eye through their eyelid. Then, take your other hand and place your other thumb about half an inch below the goat’s eye. With the second thumb, place a small amount of pressure and drag the skin downward. This will separate their eye flaps so tou can see inside. The bottom eyelid should kind of jut out when you pull downward, so you can see the color of the eyelid. The color should be about the same as the gums. There is a “good rule of thumb” to follow when looking for parasites. Look at your thumb and use it as a guideline. Seriously, the color of your thumbnail should typically represent a very basic guideline that should give you n idea of what to look for in the goat’s gums and eyelids. One your thumbnail, there is usually a gradient to the color on your nailbed. Closer to the base of your nail is a darker pink, and that is the color you are looking for in a healthy goat. The lighter pink color and even the white tips of your nails are what you would expect to find in a goat that has parasites.

Treatment of parasites.

To treat the parasites, you have a variety of treatment methods. There is Cydectin, Valbazen, Safeguard, or diatomaceous earth if you are inclined to natural or Organic farming. All of these different medications should be used in turn so the goat doesn’t build an immunity to any specific wormer. Cycle through at least three different wormer medications to prevent this.

Story Time!

The worst case of parasites I have ever seen was in this little goat I bought off of a fellow Boer goat breeder. They had this doe, but she was half the size she should have been for her age. When I visited the farm to look at her before I bought her, I noticed she was very small and that she was very bony. The owners told me that they had no idea why she was small, but she might have worms, they just never took the time to check. I checked her gums and eyelids while I was t their farm, and they were white as a sheet of copy paper. I took the chance on buying this little goat because she had good bloodlines. When I got her home, I started her on an intensive round of wormer medication. Now, after almost a year, this little goat is larger than the other doe her age and is very healthy.