



House Training and House Goats

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Sue Weaver

www.ozarkwriter.com

Author of *The Backyard Goat, Hobby Farms Goats, and Mini Goats*

It's surprisingly easy to house train a goat if you start with a bottle baby. Why would you want to? Well, it's easier and it makes your house smell better if you take a house-kept bottle kid outdoors to pee than it is to clean up after him. Or, and this is the big one, you can raise a kid to become a full- or part-time house goat or to become a therapy goat that doesn't do his business during visitations.



House training basics

We pad trained our first house trained kid but have since trained a dozen plus to go outdoors. Here's how we do it.

* You'll need a roomy, wire dog crate with a tray and blanket or towel bedding; blankets or towels because it's easy to see if someone has peed in their crate whereas with straw or shavings it isn't.

* We buy used blankets at thrift shops and yard sales, making sure to launder them several times in hot water with plenty of soap because of the danger of bringing home bedbugs nowadays. We hang ours out to dry in the sun but if you have a dryer, that works too.

* If you can find old wool blankets, grab them! They soak up a lot of fluid and dry very quickly; plus, the more you wash them, the more they felt and the thicker they get (remember this when cutting blankets into usable-size pieces).

* Fleece throws are soft and wonderful for the top layer in a crate and those ugly synthetic pressed-fiber blankets are good too as both kinds dry very quickly.

* Towels work but since we don't use a clothes dryer, they dry too slowly for us.

* Tear or cut the blankets into usable-size pieces. We usually make wool pieces a little larger than crate-size (remember, they shrink) and the others double-size so they can be folded over once. We put in several layers, so the bed is nice and comfy.



* Most kids appreciate a plush animal or two to cuddle up with and sometimes nibble. We have a pair of mama sheep (they're both named Sheep Mama) that have been through quite a few kids. Most plush toys can be

washed many dozens of times if you drop them in a pillowcase and knot it shut before machine washing in cold water.

* The actual training is exactly like training a puppy. Keep the kid in his crate unless you're able to watch him very closely. If he starts to pee in his crate or on the floor, whip him up and carry him outside, set him down and make a big fuss when he finishes outside.

* Always take him out immediately after eating, napping, or racing around the house like a banshee. Carry him so he doesn't pee before you get outdoors.

* Set him down and start urging him to pee-pee (or whatever your favorite phrase might be). Keep it up. It may take a while before he performs for the first few times; be patient (it can be hard). Don't interrupt him mid-pee because he'll stop—just start with the happy “good boy!” chatter and when he's finished, pick him up and cuddle him or play with him, so he knows he's done well.

* If it's cold out or snowing or raining or for some other reason he's eager to go back in the house, take him in as soon as he's peed. Otherwise, set him down and walk him around a bit in case he needs to make berries.

* Little kids can't hold urine very long, so you'll make a lot of trips outdoors at first.

* Fortunately, most kids 'get it' pretty quickly and perform within minutes of going out. Once he understands, you won't have to carry him; he'll wait until he gets outside.

* With tiny kids, we go out just before we go to bed around 10 PM, again around 1:30 AM and again around 3:30 AM. By the time they're a few weeks old, one night trip is sufficient and eventually you'll only have to take him out at bedtime and first thing in the morning. If most kids absolutely have to go at night, they'll scream and wake you up.

* We also give tiny kids a small bottle (2-4 ounces or so, depending on size and breed) at each night outing, but by the time they're 2 weeks old, their last feeding is at about 10 PM and the next is when we get up around 6 AM.

* This all works best if you can clicker train your baby but most tiny kids don't eat treats, so we rely on profuse praise until they do. Some people click/reward using a slurp from a bottle of milk but we find that distracts kids and they're eyeballing the bottle instead of thinking of peeing.

* Some poop only outdoors. Many will mostly poop outdoors. A few want to poop wherever they are. Goat berries are easily picked up, even in the house (think: Dustbuster), so we don't obsess about that.

* I think bucklings are easier to train because most of them have a pre-pee ritual (backing up and then stretching out) that tells us, "Get him out—quick!"; girls just squat, so you have to be quick to get them outdoors before they go. And at least in our experience the boys are happy to go out and immediately pee whereas girls want to play awhile first. This isn't a big deal during the day but wearing when it's drizzling and 2 AM.

* If a kid makes a whoopsie in his crate, take out the blankets, spray the floor of the crate with dilute bleach solution and wipe that up, then re-bed the crate with fresh blankets or towels. Add a small handful of baking soda to blanket-laundering water to zap odors. It's important that the bedding doesn't smell pissy or the kid might think it's okay to pee in his crate.



* These tips work well for indoor potty pad training, too. Just take him to the pad and wait until he performs instead of taking him outdoors. Bring something low to sit on at first; you'll need to keep him on the pad until he figures out what you want him to do and

it's easier if you're down at his level.

* Pee-pee pads for puppies work for kids but since I'm thrifty, I made mine out of an old comforter re-sewn into several kid-size pads, and I placed old towels

under them for extra absorbency. Our pads were made from an old red comforter, so we started referring to the potty spot as 'Red Square'. As we carried our kid, Kerla, to the pee-pee pad we'd tell him, "Run to Red Square!" and within a week or so, off he'd go without being carried. He eventually went there all by himself when he needed to pee.

* I know people who train kids to use an extra-large litter box (like a toddler-sized wading pool) filled with sand. Easy-peasy and there's virtually no cleanup.

* These tips also work well for house training lambs

Additional tips:

* You can train more than one kid at a time. We've trained several groups of 2 and one group of 3. It's more hectic—but doable.

* If you don't already have a wire dog crate, try to get one with a front opening but also a top that opens up. It will **really** save your back.

* Screw-out plastic crate cups for dogs work well for feed and water and the cup part is easy to remove to clean.

* Soup bowls with handles make good feed and water cups too. Secure them in the corners of the crate using short, lightweight bungee cords.

* Older kids seem to take perverse delight in pawing up the blankets we use for crate bedding. We addressed that problem by using large, spring-type paper clips in all 4 corners, 1 along each side, and 1 at the back to secure the topmost blanket to the crate.

* Here's a tip we highly recommend: cover the crate with a bed sheet when you go to bed, rather like covering a bird's cage. Baby goes right to sleep and generally doesn't stir at night unless he truly needs to go out to pee.

* Tie several bells on sturdy cord and hang it in your kid's crate. It makes a great toy but best, the bells jingle when he gets up, so you'll know when he's awakened from a nap and needs to go out. Make sure the clappers are well-secured, so he doesn't nibble and accidentally swallow one.

* Avoid teaching baby to run to the door to go back indoors after a pee run. In fact, for the first week or so, until he's figured out what you want him to do, carry him a good way from the door before setting him down. When he's finished, pick him back up and carry him into the house. Some kids love being indoors and race back to the door to be taken inside. It's frustrating (especially when it's cold, at 3 AM) when you have to scoop him up and carry him back to his designated peeing area 10 or 12 times before he complies.



* Plan ahead for rainy nights. Goats hate to get wet and kids

are no exception. You'll need some sort of simple shelter to place him in or under, depending on what you use. We started with a dog grooming table draped with a plastic tarp but nowadays we keep our tarp-covered goat tote (a wire cage used to haul goats in the back of a pickup truck) right outside the door. When it's raining, I chuck baby in the goat tote where he can do his thing without getting wet (I still get wet but I don't mind—too much). A tarp-covered picnic table or the like would work well too.

* If it's snowing, your kid will want a reasonably snow-free spot to do his thing. A good way to provide that is to spread and leave a plastic tarp on the ground or on an area of packed snow. Pull it aside when baby goes out to pee, and back into place when he's finished.

* It's also best to have someplace for your kid to stay when you aren't at home, where he can pee and poop whenever he needs to go, like a safe stall in the barn where he can see other animals out and about and he won't be lonely while you're gone. This is also a workable alternative for those who can't or don't want to get up and take a kid out to do his thing in the middle of the night. Keep him in the house during the day, then take him to his stall in the barn overnight.

House goat tips

Goats can be fun, affectionate house pets but house goat keeping is not for the easily discouraged or faint at heart.

* If your goat isn't house trained, you can diaper her using disposables ranging in size from preemie to adult Depends. You'll also find more about diapering bottle babies in the kidding section of this book and for even more diapering tips, run a Google search for: *diapers goats* and *diapers lambs* (what works for one species works well for the other).

* Goats, especially kids, chew cords of all kinds: phone, computer, appliances, whatever. If there's a way to train them not to, I haven't found it yet. Be prepared to insert cords in PVC pipe or place barriers in front of them (we use old-fashioned window screens designed to be inserted in sash windows). It's a lot like keeping a house rabbit.

* They are dedicated climbers. It's sometimes possible to train goats to stay off of counters and so forth by squirting them with a stream of water from a squirt gun while yelling, "Off!" But don't count on it. Even kids are astounding climbers. I once went to the bathroom, leaving our first 2 bottle babies, Salem and Shiloh,

loose in the house. When I came back out a few minutes later, Salem (who was only 4 weeks old and still a little guy) was on top of the refrigerator. He'd hopped onto a chair, then to the counter, from there to the breadbox, and up to the top of the fridge. Be forewarned.

* Goats also love to nosh on paper, so keep paper products (toilet paper seems to be a favorite), books, and the like out of reach.

* Fit your house goat with a collar and nice-sounding bell, so you pretty much know where he is at all times. Any time you use a collar on a goat, kid or adult, adjust it so that it isn't so loose that he can snag it on something and accidentally hang himself. Cheap, dollar store dog collars (like the one in the picture to your right) with plastic clip closures are ideal for adult goats because they're strong enough to use for leading but they come open if the wearer gets caught on something and tries to break free.



* If this sounds like something you might like to pursue, join the Goats and Sheep in the House group at Facebook:

www.facebook.com/groups/goatsandsheepinthehouse

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Sue Weaver – Ozark Writer

www.ozarkwriter.com

goatberrypie@gmail.com

www.facebook.com/sue.weaver.writer