GOT MILK?

HOMESTEAD DAIRYING WITH GOATS/SHEEP

Homestead dairying involves raising goats (and/or sheep) on a small scale often for self-sufficiency or small-scale commercial sales.

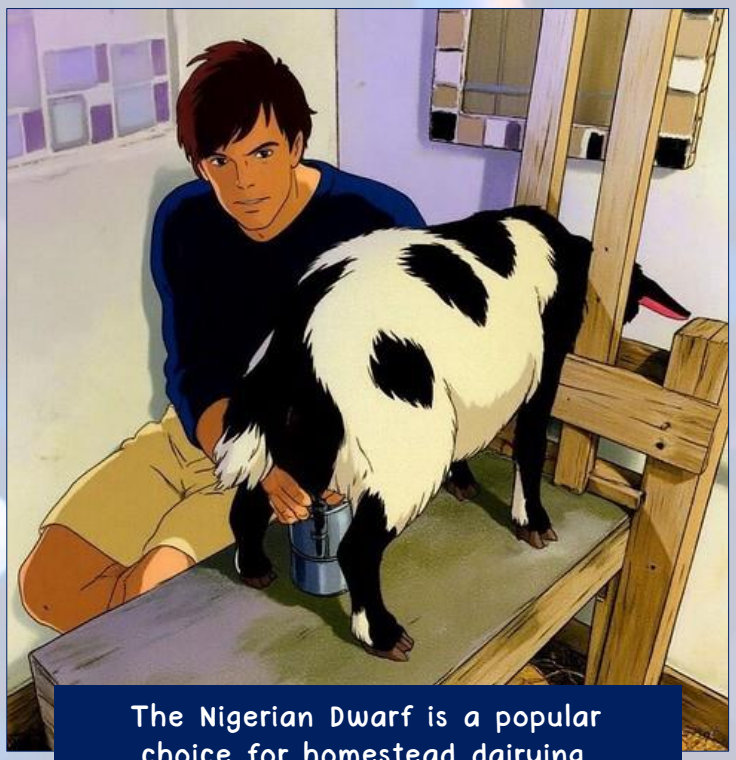
Many people keep a few goats and/or sheep to provide milk, cheese, or other dairy products for personal consumption. Sometimes, they feed the milk back to the offspring or to other livestock.

On small homestead dairies, does/ewes are often milked by hand. Kids/lambs are usually separated, and milking is done twice a day. It is very important to be hygienic to prevent contamination of the milk and protect the female's teats and udder.

After milking, the milk should be strained, then cooled to 35°F to inhibit bacterial growth. Raw milk should be consumed in 3 to 5 days. Milk can be pasteurized in a double boiler. Pasteurization kills harmful bacteria. You can also buy a pasteurizer for small quantities of milk ($500 and up). For health reasons, it is recommended that all milk be pasteurized before being consumed.

Making milk into soap is becoming an increasingly popular undertaking for small scale dairy producers. You don't need a special license to sell soap, but you'll need to adhere to certain regulations when selling it. The demand for sheep/goat milk soap is growing significantly due to the positive attributes of the products.

It is more common to drink goat milk than sheep. Both milks are used to make cheese and other products. The milks can be mixed to create unique flavors. Certain forages and the presence of a buck can taint the taste of the milk (and cheese).



The Nigerian Dwarf is a popular choice for homestead dairying.

Breeds vary considerably in the amount of milk they produce. Goats lactate longer and produce more milk than sheep, but sheep milk is richer and yields more cheese. Standard size dairy goats produce more milk than miniature or non-dairy breeds, but fat percentage favors the minis, especially Nigerian Dwarfs. Nubians also have a higher fat percentage. In sheep, East Friesians produce the most milk while the Lacaune improves the fat and protein content. Non-dairy breeds are harder to milk, lactate for fewer days, and produce less milk.

Be sure to know the laws in your state or province.

Federal and state laws govern the sale of most dairy products. State regulations vary by state and are usually the same or similar to those for cow dairies. Raw milk is milk that has not been pasteurized. It comes directly from the doe or ewe. Laws pertaining to the sale of raw milk differ by state. Approximately 30 states allow sales of raw milk; however, the methods of sale may vary. Laws pertaining to the sale of pet milk (usually raw) also differ by state.

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