What is Milk Goiter?

Milk goiter is normal and nothing to be concerned about.

Milk goiter (also called milk neck) is common in some breeds of goats (dairy influenced) and sheep (hair breeds). It is a soft swelling in the neck on both sides of the larynx, sometimes under the jaw. The size varies, from barely noticeable to quite large. The soft swelling is the enlargement of the thymus. There is no medicine that will make milk goiter go away. Nor is one needed.

It should be left alone. Milk goiter is normal and nothing to be concerned about. It is thought to be part of the maturing of the immune system in young mammals. It is associated with heavy milking breeds. It is a sign that animals are well-fed. It will eventually go away after weaning.

It is important not to mistake milk goiter for something it's not!

Milk goiter is often misdiagnosed as an iodine deficiency: **GOITER**, an enlargement of the thyroid gland. Goats are particularly susceptible, as they have a higher requirement for iodine than other animals. Lambs/kids are usually stillborn or born weak, with only a small chance of survival. They are usually hair-less or poorly fleeced; so, more susceptible to cold, wet weather To prevent goiter, it is important to feed a salt mixture that contains iodine (especially if your soils are deficient) and to make sure animals consume enough of it.

Milk goiter is sometimes mistaken for "**BOTTLE JAW**" (sub-mandibular edema), a sign of severe parasitic infestation (with barber pole worm); sometimes, poor nutrition or other diseases. Bottle jaw is a soft swelling under the jaw. Small ruminants with bottle jaw will usually be anemic (have pale mucous membranes; FAMACHA© 4-5).

Milk goiter is sometimes mistaken for an **ABSCESS**, including caseous lymphadenitis (CL). CL abscesses are usually hard lumps located near a lymph gland.

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