Welcome to the World of Nigerian Dwarf Goats

The Nigerian Dwarf is a minor breed, considered to be a dairy goat in miniature, and so to have the graceful, refined, proportions of the dairy goat at about 1/3 the size: Maximum height at the withers (high point of shoulder) for does: 22 1/2″, bucks: 23 1/2″. The care of your Nigerian is similar to the care of other goats. Good management (selection, nutrition, parasite control, health care, housing and responsible breeding) is the foundation of your herd and this will determine the ultimate condition and confirmation of your stock. Goats are herd animals, so depend on the companionship of other goats. Two goats make a herd, as do a goat and a sheep, if raised together. A single goat is a miserable goat owner. For their housing you must provide a barn, shed, or a large dog house so they can get out of rain, snow, wind and sun. You must provide a sturdy fence; the BEST fencing is four foot high by 16 foot long graduated livestock panels or “poultry/rabbit” fence with wrapped rather than welded corners is ideal and will last. As you think about fencing, remember that your goal is twofold: to keep your goats where you want them, and to protect them from dogs and coyotes who are their greatest threat. Never trust a dog or dogs with your goats! Dogs are predators—goats are prey. The feeding requirements of your goats depends on their age and gender. As ruminants, they depend on a diet primarily of hay. Sweet smelling, non dusty, second cut grass or grass/legume hay is ideal for all and should be fed free choice. Males are prone to developing kidney/urinary tract stones (calculi) so should be maintained on a low protein, low calcium diet. A mineral balance achieved with a goat-formula mineral supplement aids in the prevention of urinary calculi. I recommend feeding males limited grain once they are over 6 months to one year of age, augmented with a goat-formulated mineral supplement. Avoiding high protein feed supplements significantly reduces the risk of developing urinary calculi (blockage). You can give your wether or buck a vegi or fruit treat while the girls get their grain. (If you insist on feeding grain to (mature) males, use a “Lamb Finisher” pellet. These contain a urine acidifier, ammonium chloride, which helps prevent calculi and is the grain of choice; not more than 1/8-1/4 cup per day). If you’ve had a problem with UC you might try adding extra urine acidifiers. Does benefit from alfalfa and/or increased grain -16 or 18% protein goat feed (ex. Caprine Challenger by Blue Seal) when pregnant or lactating. Mature non-breeding, animals may be maintained on a good quality hay alone. Kids are growing and benefit from a high protein diet. I strongly recommend feeding kids a starter pellet medicated with a coccidiastat for their first 6 months. It is also a good idea to have your vet check the stool for coccidia and other parasites regularly when your goats are young and annually when mature. Goats enjoy a variety of extras: a salt block, fruit and vegetable scraps, baked goods in moderation, tree prunings (apple, pine, spruce, maple, willow…). Be careful to avoid mold! Goats are very susceptible to mold toxins. Avoid toxic plants!: Rhododendron, azalea, yew(looks like spruce but no scent), laurel, cherry… these can kill in very small doses. Never change the diet suddenly, always introduce new or extras in small quantities. If your goat over eats (gorges on grain) that which it is not accustomed, watch it carefully for signs of illness and be prepared to call the vet. Goats need fresh water at all times. They also benefit from a salt block. A mineral supplement formulated for goats should be provided (see references: Springbriar). Goats need to be immunized annually for: C/D Tetanus and Rabies and receive a Selenium injection if living in a deficient area (the northeast). For the best of
health, you should deworm your goats at least four times a year. The treatment I have come to like the best is “Eprinex”, a pour-on antiparasitic available from Jeffers Supply. It controls both internal and external parasites, has no milk or meat withdrawal time, and is very convenient to administer. Ivermectin paste (available at feed store) is a good broad range wormer. These should be rotated with Fenbebdazol paste to avoid resistance of the parasites. Pasture rotation is your best tool in parasite control. Hooves must be be trimmed as needed: the bottom should be flat without edges curling under. Scissors type garden pruning shears work well. Goats are sociable, playful creatures. They enjoy gentle attention; do not play aggressively with them or they will become aggressive (if you rub their head playing butting games they will but you unpredictably). They especially enjoy a neck or chest rub. They enjoy climbing and jumping on rocks, stumps, and platforms made for their pleasure (and your entertainment). When you bring your goat home, expect that it will be frightened and nervous until it gets used to it’s new home. It will probably be a bit noisy, may act shy, and will need TLC and reassurance that it’s new home is a safe, comfortable, happy place. It usually takes about a week to settle in. Don’t chase your goat, let him/her come to you; it helps to offer a treat (handful of grain or vegie-fruit treat). The Rosasharn herd is tested annually for Caprine Arthritic Encephalitis (CAE) and Johnnes Disease (as well as TB and Brucellosis): they are consistently negative. They do not have contagious abscesses (Caseous Lymphadenitis). These are the three most serious, deadly, contagious goat diseases. Beware of these when adding new goats (or other ruminants) to your heard. A healthy goat appears contented, alert, has an apitite and chews its cud. Its coat is smooth and glossy, skin is clean and pliable. One can feel the ribs under the skin but bones do not appear to jut out. The manure consists of formed, slightly moist pellets which, with the urine should be passed without effort. The normal body tempature of a goat is 102-103F. The normal pulse is 70-80/minute.

(article taken from http://rosasharnfarm.com/wordpress/goats/care-tips)