



### **Feeding/caring for wethers**

The bottom line is keeping their entire diet at a 2:1 calcium phosphorus ratio and maintaining a clean, easy to access water source. They need an overall diet that has double the calcium of phosphorus and clean water, preferably in their shelter.

Alfalfa is the biggest contributor to calcium in most diets.

Grain and grain based snacks (most things made with flour) are higher in phosphorus.

I carefully choose as many well balanced things as I can.

Their mineral is 2:1

Their hay should be 2:1 (unless there is alfalfa in the hay - likely it will be higher in phosphorus than it should be. Try and buy tested hay.)

I buy tested hay (from KCM hay in Molalla, OR) and used balanced minerals (Sweetlix meat maker 16:8 loose goat mineral). The first week of every month the boys get Mana Pro Goat Mineral instead of Sweetlix. This has ammonium chloride in it and allows for a pulse dose with little effort.

I know my hay is about 1:1 so I use alfalfa pellets for my boys (wethers and bucks ages 1.5yrs-8.5yrs) to make sure I bring that calcium level up. They do not get any grain or grain treats (no animal cookies or other human flour based treats). They DO get a few peanuts or carrots both which are higher phos so I make sure to keep the alfalfa high enough to balance it. On a usual day the wethers get about 1 cup of alfalfa pellets per day per boy. Bucks get more depending on need. My elder buck is stall fed so that he can have about 4 cups total of Special Blend, Alfalfa pellets and a little black oil sunflower seeds.

I do think genetics plays a role and age of castration contributes to the size of the urethra (so stones are more likely to get stuck. Delayed castration doesn't prevent stone formation, it just allows the spaces stones might travel to grow bigger, helping prevent a block.

Water is a HUGE thing. Boys should have easy access to CLEAN fresh water. All the time. They aren't going to leave shelter to go get water. Studies in cows show higher rates of urinary issues in winter when they are less likely to travel to water troughs.

I always make sure the boys have water in their shelters. I use a 2 gallon bucket that gets fresh hot water at least once a day and a 5 gallon bucket I rinse and fill with the hose. Smaller buckets are easier to dump and keep very clean compared to large troughs. Snow and ice are NOT substitutes for water. Stagnant urine is more likely to form stones and they are less likely to drink dirty water.

To our knowledge none of our wethers sold from our farm have ever had an incident of UC but we are still aware of the potential issue and work to avoid it here and educate buyers.

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