

# Alpine Dairy Goat



Kingdom: Animalia  
Phylum: Chordata  
Subphylum: Vertebrata  
Class: Mammalia  
Order: Artiodactyla  
Family: Bovidae  
Genus: *Capra*  
Species: *hircus*



Photo courtesy of Lynne Panebianco

## Habitat

- **In the Wild:** This is a domesticated breed of goat that is not found in the wild. (A breed is a group of organisms within a species developed by artificial selection and maintained by controlled reproduction.) It originated in the Alps of Switzerland and France and has been raised in almost all habitats. They do require grass for grazing, but can live in areas of sparse growth that cannot support sheep or cows.
- **Exhibit Location:** Domestic Animal Barn

## Characteristics

- Height: males (bucks) = 34-40 inches; females (does) = 30 inches {height is measured at the highest point of the back between the shoulders}
- Weight: males (bucks) = 170 pounds; females (does) = 135 pounds
- The ears are erect and the face is straight. Both sexes have horns that are hollow.
- The hair is medium to short in length and comes in all colors and color combinations. Both sexes are usually shorthaired, but the bucks usually have a ridge of long hair along the spine. The beard of the males is also quite long.
- This breed is comprised of several varieties: British, Rock, Swiss, and French. The French is the most numerous and is also known as the Alpine Dairy Goat.
- This breed is designed to produce a lot of milk.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** not found in the wild; **In Captivity** 15 years

## Behaviors

- These animals have a well-developed herding instinct and prefer to be in a group.
- Goats are diurnal (active during the day), spending most of their time eating shrubs, trees, herbs, and scrub.
- There is a rank structure in herds, with males butting heads for status.
- Goats use their 5 senses to experience their surroundings. They communicate using sight, smell, and hearing; the males using touch when butting heads for status.
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** peanut butter logs, pine trees and branches, scents on branches (peppermint, etc.), broom brushes to rub on, fresh vegetables hung around their yard, furniture rearranged in their yard

## Reproduction

- Female goats become sexually mature at 1 year of age and males at 6 months of age.
- Females (does) come into estrus every 21 days for 1-2 days. Fall/winter is their natural breeding season.
- The gestation period is about 155 days. Twins are commonly born and triplets are not uncommon.
- The young are born with 6 lower incisors and by 4 weeks of age have a full set of milk teeth consisting of the 6 lower incisors and 24 molars. The upper jaw does not develop milk teeth; rather it has bony plates to rub against the lower teeth.
- The young (kids) are born able to walk and follow mom just hours after birth. They are weaned at about 10 months of age.

## Diet

- **In the Wild:** not applicable (not found in the wild)
- **At the Zoo:** hay, grain, vitamin E

## Conservation Status

- **IUCN status:** not listed; **CITES Appendix:** not listed
- Alpine dairy goats are a common domesticated breed of goat.
- Predators: coyotes, dogs, cougars, foxes, eagles, bobcats

## Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- French Alpines are the dominating variety in the United States today. All these animals are directly descended from 19 does and 3 bucks imported in 1922 by Dr. DeLangle in France. The greatest numbers are on the west coast of the United States, where they are great milk producers even in the hottest of weather. They are increasing in popularity on the east coast and are numerous in the Midwest.
- Goats are picky eaters and do not eat tin cans.
- Worldwide, more people consume milk and milk products from goats than from any other animal.
- Goats' milk is more easily digestible than cow's milk.
- Goats are used for their milk, meat, and hide.

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