

produce stunted growth of females or problems at kidding.

Meat goat production in North Florida can benefit from the ability of the local native goat to exhibit estrus all year round. Animals can therefore be bred at different times in the course of a calendar year, yielding shorter kidding intervals than the seasonal dairy breeds (8 months vs 12 months). Three kid crops in two years is a realistic goal or objective for meat goat producers. Examples of proving basic guidelines for reducing kidding interval (period between two successive kiddings) thereby increasing kid crop per unit of time. Therefore, the dates you decide to breed goats in your area will depend on the following:

- available markets and the season of the year when there is a market demand
- feed supply
- quality and quantity of available forage
- available labor
- climate
- facilities and equipment.

### **Accelerated Kidding Schedule**

The suggested breeding time for a herd of wood goats in North Florida to achieve 3 successive kid crops in two years, begins with Fall/October breeding in year 1, July breeding in year 2 and March breeding in year 3 (Table 7.2).

Always ensure that, with such a breeding/kidding schedule, females are adequately fed and receive excellent health care. In the absence of these management inputs there could be reduced conception rates in the older does, and shorter lifetime performance/reduced longevity in the younger females.

### **The Effect of Breeding Season on the Reproductive Performance of Wood Does in North Florida**

The effect of breeding season on the reproductive performance of female wood does not appear to be significantly different for the summer and fall breeding seasons (Table 7.3). However, the kidding

percent for the late winter 1989 breeding is relatively low (141.7%) and should be viewed with some caution. Probable causes for this are: 1) the advancing age of the breeding does (>7 years), and 2) the increasing demands on their reproductive tracts caused by a reduced kidding interval of 8 months; non-productive animals were subsequently culled prior to the following breeding season (Table 7.3).

Fall breeding seems to have a slight advantage over the others; however, a breeding policy can include summer and late winter breeding. Available forage for the lactating does/suckling kids and weaners will also influence time of breeding.

## **FACILITIES AND HOUSING**

### **Fencing and Protection**

Good fences are very important if you are to succeed in raising goats. Goats can often go over or under fences that are perfectly good for keeping cattle or other livestock in. If your goats get out, they can quickly destroy your or your neighbors' vegetable gardens, young fruit trees, or ornamental plants. In addition to keeping your goats in, the fence should also keep the goat's natural enemies, dogs, out. One large dog, such as a German Shepherd, can kill or seriously injure several goats in a very short time. Strands of barbed wire at both the top and bottom of woven wire fences help keep goats in and dogs out. One problem with barbed wire at the bottom of a fence is that young kids may try to get under it and become caught, cutting themselves badly or losing an eye.

One way to lessen the danger of barbed wire is to staple the woven wire to the inside of the posts, with the bottom strand at ground level, and staple the barbed wire to the outside of the post just off the ground. This way, the barbed wire protects against dogs digging in under the fence, but the kids are not likely to be injured by the barbs.

Board fences are good, especially around the kidding area, but the boards must be spaced close enough to keep young goats (kids) in and dogs out. Electric fences have been used for perimeter as well as cross fences. However, it is advisable to use net wire for the perimeter and electric wire for internal fences. Gates for goats do not need to be more than 18 inches wide, but you should have a wide gate to get a tractor into the pasture for disking, fertilizing or other purposes.