

WORKING WITH THE BEST (recipe for “gruel”)

by Kathy Daves

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orking on farms with goats has been my life and I do mean my life. Meeting people on the road has been a blessing. I have met some of the best friends that a person could ever have, and then another bonus, they raise goats. After moving to South Carolina I met many new farms but one that sticks out most in my mind is Thunder Ray Boer Ranch. Barry and Barbara Neiderhiser lived in Holly Hill South Carolina when I met them. They raised goats, not all full bloods, some percentages. They had any color you would want. After meeting them we decided to start looking at genetics. They quickly agreed to start culling and start working to improve their herd. Barbara, I think read everything that she could get her hands on about Boer goats. She read book after book, she has brought a lot of knowledge to my life. She once said to me, "you can never treat a goat, you have to nurse it" and I promise you she has done her share.

The first time I went to their home I will never forget there was a Boer goat lying on their front porch, her name—Cinderella. This was not a goat, she was a princess. She rode in a truck; she sat on a sofa and got into trouble whenever she felt it was necessary. She was their child. Barbara called one night in a panic. She had been out working on one of the members in her herd, pulled the plastic glove off and guess who ate it. We stayed up with Cinderella almost all night trying to make sure she could pass it. I have got news for you folks, goats will not normally eat anything. Cinderella went home to my farm and stayed all week to make sure we did not have any problems. She went to the barn, stayed with the other goats, not really minding it, lay on top of the hill and looked at them as if to say, "Do you know who I am, I'm the Queen of the Hill ? Cinderella, Barbara's first bottle baby, is on the www.goatwisdom.com website. Cinderella was the “flower kid” in their wedding. Barbara also takes her goats into the community - they visit area nursing homes and day care programs. "There is nothing better than holding a goat", Barbara replied to me, "it makes people smile". As you can tell, Barb has a heart of gold.

Thunder Ray Boer Ranch is running a herd between 40 to 60. If you like color, you are at the right place ... red boers, black boers, painted boers, horned and naturally polled. On the farm, each animal is evaluated daily and receives a close inspection with hoof trimming every other month. They have a strict vaccination and de-worming program. The keys to having a healthy herd are good shelter, feed with hay, browse and grain, vaccination and worming program, routine monthly care, and nutritional supplements. Since Barbara began giving the breeding does, a daily 50/50 twenty to forty cc drench of Red Cell and Register's Goat Supply Goatade, they have had strong kids and does, who have remained healthy during and after kidding. She also provides Kelp and brewer's yeast free choice. The brewer's yeast helps with keeping a strong immune system. Kelp aids in milk production.

One more to share is the “gruel” that Barbara makes for goats that can't eat because of being so ill or when one needs a huge boost in nutrition. "I make gruel out of bran cereal, wheat germ, wheat germ oil, molasses, vitamin C, rosemary, and dolomite as the base", she says. Then she blends it with the Magic Bullet and some water so she can drench them with the gruel. She warms the gruel to give it to them. They love it! If it's for a kid, she will add milk replacer. Then if it's a goat that may be dehydrated, she'll add electrolytes to it. And probios might be added too. "Kathy, it does help. It brought Ray Ray. a 200 pound buck, back after being at death's door and a little doe whose lungs were so full of fluid that our vet couldn't see her heart on the x-ray". When they are seriously ill, you have to treat them as if their in a "goat hospital", close monitoring, heating pads, lifts, whatever is needed to keep them comfortable. Yes, you can bring a goat through a hard time. They have an incredible will to live. They need our persistent constant attentive loving care to bring them through. One treatment is not enough.

These are Barbara's own words, "a book that I've added to my library is Pat Colby's Natural Goat Care, I think it's one that you suggested. It's great. I use it with Smith and Sherman's Goat Medicine, the book that you recommended. I'm also a member of the GoatWorld website and get all the 911 e-mails. I've learned a lot from these folks, and Goatwisdom. When you've lived in an area with no veterinary support available or veterinarians with little experience with goats, you are having to care for them mostly on your own ... you do all you can and do the best you can. I've taken notes and have a notebook full of information from Goatworld, Goatwisdom and other websites, along with what you've taught me. I'm not great with goat care and am no expert, but I'm better than I was a year ago. Always learning!!! You just do the best you can. There is nothing like watching healthy kids playing in the pasture or a sweet goat nuzzle. This makes it all worth while."

The Neiderhiser's can be reached by phone at 678-327-6228 or email thundermountain@windstream.net.

Goatade can be obtained from Register's Goat Supplies at 1-888-310-9606. Organic and Thorvin Kelp, and Brewer's Yeast can be obtained from Countryside Natural Products in Va. at 1-888-699-7088