Getting Your Goat

Jennie Grant

If you are of the gardening and chicken keeping persuasion and happen to meet a baby goat, you will probably say to yourself, “Goats are for me!” But you might be wrong. While goats are curious, affectionate and produce milk, they are also a tremendous amount of work and responsibility.

A goat in milk must be milked at least once a day, preferably twice. This makes leaving home for a few days difficult since few people have the necessary milking skills to cover for you while you are gone. Acquiring the skills to milk well takes a week of milking at least once daily, and, like many new skills, is extremely discouraging at first.

On the upside, goats are very lovable and can produce upwards of a gallon of rich creamy milk a day. If you have never tasted fresh goat milk and turn up your nose at the gamey flavored goat milk at the grocery store, you will be pleasantly surprised to try fresh goat milk. It is smooth enough tasting to work well in coffee or on cereal by even the fussiest of eaters.

Grocery store goat milk takes about five days to get from the goat’s udder to the grocery store shelves. This is about the same time it begins to take on a goat-like flavor. Keeping dairy goats costs approximately $75 a month not including the costs of preparing your goat yard and goat shed. Also, contrary to popular opinion, goats are terrible lawn mowers. They do, however, excel in defoliating and debarking trees and bushes. For this reason, and the safety of your goats, it’s important to build a goat-proof fence.

What does a goat proof fence look like? If you’d like to find out and are interested in learning more about life with goats, sign up for Seattle Tilth’s Chicken Coop and Urban Farm Tour. Goat keepers and goats will be there to answer your questions. You can even visit the Goat Justice League’s state-of-the-art-goat-shed.

Jennie Grant is the president of the Goat Justice League and author of “City Goats, the Goat Justice League’s Guide to Backyard Goat Keeping.”