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By Wendy Hargreaves

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## About the Author

Wendy Hargreaves wrote this book to help anyone that wants to keep goats.

Wendy said, "I believe that my book will give all readers enough information in plain language to help them get a good start."

"Many people that have asked me about goats have had reservations because of misinformation which is out there."

"I've concentrated on giving the facts, to the best of my knowledge. It is all based on the combined knowledge of many goat owners who have shared their experience, both good and bad, with me directly and during my research."

"I cover many points which will save each reader time, effort and money and help them treat their goats better from the start."

"Keeping goats or any other animal is not to be taken on lightly. Your commitment can be for up to seven years and that's 24 hours a day, seven days a week!"

"But, like almost everyone I've met who has shared their lives with goats, whether two or hundreds, I found that my experiences with my goats and the people they brought me in contact with, have been some of the most satisfying and enjoyable times in my life."

"Goat keeping is not push-button easy, but almost anyone that is reasonably fit and gives it a sincere effort, can make a success of keeping goats, whether for pets or as a business."

"One thing I will guarantee is that your goats will ensure that it won't be dull!"

"My guide will help you over the bumps and increase the pleasure and satisfaction you get from your goat adventure."

## Introduction

I wrote this book to help people that are thinking about owning one or more goats.

You may want to keep goats:

- ✓ To make money
- ✓ To produce fiber, meat and/or dairy products for you to sell
- ✓ To provide milk and/or meat for your family
- ✓ To get fiber for your craft
- ✓ As pack animals
- ✓ As pets
- ✓ As weed controllers

... or any combination of the above.



I understand the appeal of goats and know there is also a lot of commercial potential when you do it right.

I hope that my book will help you with information and suggestions that make your

venture more enjoyable and successful.

You will find that goats have special requirements but also have special qualities which will make your experience with them unique and unforgettable.

You may find my presentation is more down-to-earth than some books about this subject.

I want you to be aware of as many aspects of goat keeping as possible, not just the highlights.

You, your family and your goats deserve that.

## Can You Keep Goats?

There are some important questions which must be answered when you start to plan your potential goat keeping venture.

The first question is whether you will be allowed to keep any kind of goat on your premises. Goats are classed as livestock, not domestic animals.

It is far more difficult to get permission for your goats than most domestic animals, although they are also restricted to some degree in most built-up areas.

There are much stricter rules in many cities and towns about whether or not they are permitted.

Many developers put restrictions on the types of animals which are allowed in the subdivisions which they offer for sale.



If your property is in an area where goats are allowed, you will probably find restrictions relating to the minimum size of the property and the number of goats in a set area.

All this is to minimize the possibility of your animals interfering with the lifestyle and comfort of people that live near you.

Even when you have worked out that you can meet the official criteria, you should also make your own inquiries to all of those people to ensure that none of them have any serious objections to you getting goats.

Most people are reasonable and may discuss your views, especially if you are prepared with recent information from recognized sources. But, you will need your best diplomatic skills and patience is most important.

Sometimes, you will have to accept that their views are as firm as yours, but in the opposite direction.

If you cannot dispel any concerns they have and reach an understanding about your plans, you should think hard about whether it is worthwhile to proceed.

Your enjoyment of having goats and any potential for success with your business venture can be seriously compromised if there is a strong chance

that your plans might cause problems with your neighbors.

If you have neighbors who do not have livestock fairly close it's a good idea to build a profile in your community. Remember that how you are regarded in your area will affect the general opinion of your venture.

If you get started, you should think about making contact with the neighbors later and inviting any that are interested to visit your property and meet the goats. This should create some goodwill and strengthen their acceptance of your venture.



Whenever you have visitors that are not used to being around livestock, you need to be careful that they don't do anything which could cause injury to themselves or your goats.

You should also check with your insurance company about what extra insurance you might need if someone is injured by your goats or if your goats cause any damage to other people's property.

They will happily feed on many ornamental and garden plants so you need to actively prevent them being able to access your prized plants and those of your neighbors too!



## Housing Your Goats

You need to have protection for your goats from rain, snow, and other extreme conditions.



They don't like getting wet. That will affect their behavior and could have serious effects on their health if insufficient protection is available.

You need to have secure weatherproof storage for their feed and other supplies.

There must be sufficient protection from rodents and predators.

Rodents could introduce disease as well as eating and fouling food supplies and injuring the goats and their shelter.

If you milk your goats and produce any dairy products, those areas must be near to their living quarters, but must also be of a certifiable standard for food processing.

The same applies to any facilities for slaughtering and meat production.

As part of your early research, get permission to visit other goat owners who have the sort of facilities you will set up.

Check how they arrange to gather their milk goats, put them through the milking process and get them back to the main group's living area.

Get advice on how to minimize the amount of lifting and walking you will need to do.



If your goats have mostly level paddocks to forage in, you might want to build some structures which they can climb around to amuse themselves with.

Solid construction is essential. Your goats could be injured otherwise.

## Where to get Your Goats

### Auctions

This is where you will probably find the lowest prices, apart from private sales, but it is also likely to be the place where you need to be most careful.

You should always keep in mind that a low price is likely to be low for a reason.

Goat keepers will not sell their best goats at an auction because they can expect to get better prices through other venues. The prices will rise and fall from auction to auction. They are usually highest shortly before times of celebration and feasting by various groups of people which provide a ready market for meat goats.

The lowest prices will be when there is an oversupply of goats because costs of keeping them are higher than usual or there is a shortage of suitable feed or other pressures on the suppliers.

You can make useful connections at an auction but there are also risks.

Although reputable auction companies do their best to keep unhealthy goats out of the offerings, they cannot accept responsibility for any problems with any goats you buy at their sales.

Please read the health and safety sections for more information about attending auctions and other events where there are many goats and people from different places.

You should, if possible, go with someone who you trust that has a record of successful goat management. If you don't know any suitably qualified person who is available at the time, you should at least consult such a person about what to expect and what to look for at an auction, both good and bad.

If they know you well and trust you to keep a confidence, they may also help you by sharing what they know about particular auctions and sellers.

## **Shows and Other Events**

You should start gathering information and making some connections before you actually buy any goats. Going to agricultural shows, country fairs and other events is a great way to meet goat owners and compare the different breeds.

It also gives you a chance to see the standard of stock which each owner has and compare the way those who you might buy from treat their animals and their gear. High standards of cleanliness with both is an essential requirement or you might be better looking elsewhere.

All goat owners expect people to ask questions when we are at events. But, please be considerate about when you ask. The exhibitors are focused on looking after their animals, maintaining their display or pen and being prepared for any parades or judging sessions.

They also will be anxious to get some time for talking with their friends and other goat people whom they may only see during the events.

Pick times to suit them and perhaps ask them if you can contact them by post or email (some will have websites related to their goat business) with your questions.

If you are seriously considering doing business with them, ask for their business card and offer them one of yours.

Getting goats from other states or even some areas in your own state may be expensive and require more forms and tests because of past problems with breakout of disease , try to find people in your area that have the sort of goat you want.

If you are attracted to goats owned by someone further away, ask them for contact details of people in your area that they have supplied their stock to in the past.

## Goat Groups

You will always find it worthwhile to join a local group, either for your breed or for goats in general.

The only downside will be that you will probably find that you get conflicting advice from different members who each favor whatever method or remedy which has worked for them. Goat owners are known to be as stubborn as their animals. If they found a particular method worked to fix the problem which you ask about, then they will suggest that everyone use it.

That is likely to confuse you about what is best.

There is often more than one solution and each will have worked. The different owners are probably all correct, so the final choice must be yours.

Finding the ideal answer would probably require deep and time consuming investigation. That time might cause suffering for the goat or other bad consequences.

If you are still unsure, get your vet to decide and treat the animal. They have wide experience and may have found a particular tactic better for most animals in your area.

If you have a good idea of the type of goat you want, look at joining the National Association for that breed. They will have details about groups and individual owners in your area and any clubs or events where you can see them.

The national organization’s website will also have other useful information as part of their promotion of the breed and their members. Having access to their members-only information can save you time, stress and money.



Breeders can supply you with registered goats which cost more but their kids will fetch a higher price if you register your stock and follow their guidelines.

But, the breeders sometimes have goats for sale at lower prices

which may not conform to the breed specification. These will be fine to use for meat or dairy use, but you will not be able to put them in shows which only allow only registered animals.

Just because a goat comes from registered stock, does not mean it does not have any genes which could appear in some of its offspring and cause it to fail to meet all of that breed’s specifications.

## **Private Owners**

Because goats and the meat, milk and other products which they provide to us are so popular, they get a lot of great media attention.

This encourages many people to start a goat venture.

Some may have to give up their goats at some stage or they may have some which are beyond what they need or can handle. These private sales can be a way to get your goats at a low price but they will require you to make a close inspection of what they offer. It's likely that you will occasionally see signs that some of the goats on offer have not been well-cared for.

This only applies to a small minority of goat hobbyists. Most I have met have obviously lavished careful attention on their stock.

Their reasons for selling are most often because of factors related to moving to a smaller property or some other personal circumstance.

You still need to check about what veterinary care the goats have had. Ensure that they have records showing that the goats have had the required injections to ensure that you are not buying problems which could affect your current goats or infect your property so that you would not be able to sell what you produce!

## Feeding Your Goats

You will only get good results for whatever you plan to get from your goats if you are prepared to give them the time and other resources they need and deserve.

Quality feed is one of the essential elements in producing a happy and productive goat.



Although they have a reputation of eating almost anything and are used successfully for removing a lot of unwanted vegetation, they

won't survive, let alone thrive, on just what they might find in some pasture you're not using.

They can't be sustained on pasture alone. They will leave that for sheep while they crop some weeds and other plants.

They will need good quality hay, vitamins and mineral supplements.

Some grain and alfalfa could improve the output from your dairy too.

Hay provides basic nutrients to goats when they cannot get a sufficient amount from what they graze on.

Legume hays, such as alfalfa, are usually richer in nutrients such as minerals and vitamins than grass hay but the quality varies according to how it is harvested, prepared and stored.

### *Things to Consider about Feeding Your Goats*

Feeding your goats may seem a simple task but some careful planning will be needed so that you:

**1]** Ensure that all your goats get their share. Goats which have a higher rank in the group through their strength or other factors will push others aside.

You need to monitor the health of all your animals and provide feed in ways that the smaller or weaker goats get their share so they are kept

healthy.

**2]** Reduce as far as possible wastage of the hay you provide. Goats waste hay –sometimes I think it’s what they do most efficiently.

**3]** Keep the feed, as much as possible, unspoiled so that it provides your goats with good quality nutrition. This will involve keeping the feed containers above ground level. Goats will get into ground level containers and leave behind manure, dirt and other undesirable items off their fur and hooves.

**4]** Provide containers which will not trap or injure the goats. This can require extra careful preparation if any of your animals have collars or horns.

**5]** Prevent spoilage from vermin, weather conditions and the goats themselves.



## Health

There are a number of diseases, pests and viruses which can affect your goats.

They can also suffer stress in various forms.

This is something to keep in mind from when you are choosing and buying your goats and at every stage after that through your goat keeping venture.

Goats are less likely to become stressed when you try to reduce the number and impact of changes on their routine, feeding and other aspects of their lives.

If you are just buying a couple of goats, it's a good idea to get them from the same herd. This could make it easier for them to adjust when they arrive at their new home.

I strongly suggest that you check the environment, type of feed and routine which your new goats are used to so that you are aware of any significant changes which they will face at your place.



Even if you only have goats for companionship or to provide milk, meat or cheese for your own family, it is important that you have a strong commitment to keeping your animals healthy and the premises clean and in good repair.

If you want to produce any products associated with your goats for sale to be consumed by other people, you will have to abide by all relevant regulations and laws that apply to commercial operations.

This has become more important after various outbreaks of disease which have been traced back to small suppliers whose standards were breached through either

accident or a lack of knowledge.

## Companions for Goats

If you decide that you don't want to have two goats, your choice of a companion animal for your goat is limited.

If you get a sheep, you need to ensure that they do not mate. Most such matings do not go to term, and the result of a successful mating would be either a "shoat" (from a ram and a female goat) or a "geep" (from a buck goat and a ewe). The offspring is not likely to be useful and it will probably have medical problems, and there is always serious stress to the female animal which may shorten its life or otherwise damage its health.

Dogs are not suitable as either animal is capable of causing serious injury to the other.

Dogs which are used for guarding goats are only there as guards. They will not be companions as well. Both the goats and the dog(s) have to be well trained and need to be carefully monitored.



Llamas are also used but they are not ideal as they are also basically an animal that is itself preyed on.

### *Goats as Support Animals*

Some people have used goats for emotional support.

Some have tried to get their pet recognized as having a similar role to the guide dogs which are used by people with limited vision.

The special access which is mandated for those dogs means they can accompany their owners into restaurants and other premises. But, in the U.S.A., that recognition is not a legal right for any goats or most other animals.

There is no doubt in my mind that watching goats can help people to relax more.

But I'm not sure that, as much as I like goats, I would like to see any in any premises where I am eating a meal. There are too many risk factors for me to think that is appropriate.

## Biosecurity

In recent years, there have been serious outbreaks of avian flu and other diseases which have brought stricter regulations to everyone who owns or processes any kind of livestock.

The outbreaks have shown the critical importance of being able to identify the source of particular animals and plants.

Check with your State and local agricultural authorities to ensure that you are able and willing to comply with all the rules.

This may include:

- Permanent identification of all mature stock.
- Complete records of animal movements on to and away from the property.
- A special identity number for your property.
- Records showing source of all feed and other agricultural products used on the property.
- Full records of treatments of all stock, whether by you or your veterinarian.

Some of this information will also be needed if you want to show your goats or offer them for sale.

You will also have to keep abreast of regulations about transporting your goats or any you buy, especially if they are from other States.

Your State may not allow goats from areas where certain diseases or other conditions are more common.

They will also require a veterinary certificate as to the health of the animals which also shows that they are vaccinated for specific diseases.

## **Train Your Goats**

Yes, you can and should train your goats unless you have large numbers.

They are fairly intelligent but both strong and headstrong.

They can be trained to come when called and various other things.

The main requirements are gentle firmness and stubborn persistence.

You will get best results by spending as much time as possible with your goats.

You can teach them to not butt each other and especially you. If you let them do that in play, they will not respect or obey you and they may butt and injure other people!

However well you train them., you still need stronger-than-you-might-think fences, solid locked gates and reinforced protection for valuable plants.

## **Supplying Goat Meat**

When you focus on growing goats to produce meat, there is a lot of potential for profit. It is a growing market in most countries.

There are claimed to be some superior health benefits in goat meat when compared to other red meats and chicken.

Some ethnic groups are used to using and enjoying goat meat. More Americans are starting to eat goat meat either because of the claimed health benefits, after being introduced to it by people coming from countries where it is more commonly used or just because they like it.

### **Do You Have a Local Demand?**

If your property is located in an area where there are established African, Arabic or Greek communities, then you may have a ready market. You would need to check whether or not there are already a lot of goat meat suppliers there. Even then, there may be room for another quality operation or you may intend to target sections of that market which are not adequately served by the current suppliers.

There is also the possibility of supplying buyers in other areas. But, this will inevitably involve complying with another level of regulation.

If you decide to slaughter your goats yourself, you will be required to have your facilities inspected and certified as complying with the current regulations.

Even if you just process some goats for consumption by your own family and perhaps give some meat to special friends without charge, you should know the current rules and guidelines so that you minimize the risk of any health problems.

When you slaughter a goat, you should do it in a quiet area away from where your other animals are located. Use a very sharp knife. The blade should be double the width of the largest goat's neck to ensure a clean cut. Be firm but not rough when you handle the goat. To minimize the goat's suffering, do not waste any time but avoid rushing to the extent that you might make any mistakes which would increase the goat's suffering and cause possible injury to yourself.

If you process your goats for meat which will either be sold to anyone who

is not part of your family or consumed by any animals which are not yours, you will need to comply in full with the rules which a small commercial processor has to follow.

These rules are necessary for protection of consumers and the good name of the goat industry which goat breeders have worked hard to achieve.

You must comply with health regulations and will want to ensure that your goats are treated humanely and have no more than the minimum of stress and pain.

In the U.S.A., you will need to have your processing area certified as complying with all relevant regulations that apply to a small commercial processor.

### **Learn From an Experienced Local**

If you do not have any experience of slaughtering, perhaps as a hunter, you will find some videos on the Internet but you will need personal instruction from someone who slaughters goats and has full knowledge of the current legal and health requirements in your jurisdiction.

Without any supervision of your first efforts, you may cause undue suffering to the goat and perhaps injury to yourself, as well as making procedural mistakes which could cause more mess to be cleaned up and increase risk of contamination or other problems.

The person you consult could be someone that:

- You met through an event involving goats, or
- You bought goats from, or
- You know because you are member of the same goat owners' group.

Your local Agricultural Department or Agricultural College may also be able to supply you with the contact details of suitable people.

### ***When Buyers Want to Slaughter the Goat***

Some buyers might want to slaughter the goat themselves. If they do it on your property, you are responsible for them complying with all regulations. You may also have responsibility for their safety.

If they want to take the animal to their property before slaughter, you

should ensure that they have experience and satisfy yourself that the animal will be treated humanely while being transported as well as when it is killed.

### **Professional Services**

Some goat owners use professional services. They feel the cost is worthwhile as it reduces their involvement and responsibility.

If there is a licensed slaughter facility in your area, you can take your stock to it.

Some companies will collect your goats but this will involve making appointments and usually cost more as well.

Some of the companies are located at an auction site so that live animals can be offered and inspected and then sold. Then, arrangements can be made for them to be slaughtered on site.

In some areas, you can get a licensed butcher that will slaughter the goats on your property and then cut up and pack the meat on their premises.

All of these options will not be available in all areas. Most will need to be checked so you are comfortable with their facilities and handling of the goats and the meat.

You will also have to make bookings well in advance during busy periods and ensure that you keep all appointments whether on their premises or yours.

### **Selling Meat Goats**

Remember that there is usually a steady market for meat goats as well as the processed meat.

If you have milking goats, you can slaughter any kids and does which are excess to your needs and you cannot or do not want to sell for others to use for milk production.

## **Selling Goat Milk**

Milk from goats is becoming more popular. It cannot be sold in most areas now without being pasteurized. And, although you can consume untreated milk from your own goats, this should not be done without careful consideration of the current research in this area which views it as too risky. Certainly, anyone that has medical problems should consult their doctor before doing it just as they would before making any other significant change to their diet.

Untreated milk should never be consumed by pregnant women or young children.

That said, goats milk offers some benefits to people that are unable to drink cow's milk or who do not like cow's milk in the processed form which it is usually offered where additives are common.

If you supply milk for profit, you will likely be regulated to the same extent as big commercial dairies. You will have to use stainless steel, glass and the same materials and procedures as they do. Most places require annual or semi-annual inspections and licenses which all incur costs for the operator.

If you just produce milk for your family and to give to friends, you still should maintain the highest possible standards of hygiene to minimize potential problems.

Goats are fairly easy to milk either from the rear or the side. They will need some training, just as you will. Training them to get up on to a milking stand will reduce the effort and strain because you won't have to bend so low during the milking procedure.

You can get a better view of the whole udder if you milk from the rear of the goat but most people milk their goats from the side.

Always talk to your goats when you are near them.



## Other Products



Goats can also provide three types of fiber which all have a ready market . Of course, Mohair is the most valuable but the market for all three seems to be growing steadily.

### *Mohair*

Angora goats produce mohair in reasonable amounts. Shear them twice a year and they may produce up to nine pounds of fiber or more from each goat. This can vary widely.

It is very important that the fiber is not contaminated with weeds, dirt, urine etc., or the price will be severely affected. Repeated batches of contaminated fiber could make buyers very wary of buying more in the future.

### *Cashmere*

Another very popular fiber is Cashmere. This is underneath a layer of coarser hair which must be removed before the cashmere is further processed.

The quality of the fiber from a particular goat can vary from clip to clip.

### *Cashgora*

Cashgora is a coarser and shinier fiber produced by goats that are cross-bred from angora and cashmere parents.

The prices paid for this type of fiber depends on how easy the particular variety is to process.

There is some serious interest in it and it will be interesting to see how it is developed.

## **Hands On**

This section gives you information about the things which you need to do to your goat.

Some of the procedures are pretty simple but others are not.

I will give you some basic points but there are some things which need to be seen close-up and practiced under supervision so that you minimize any risk of discomfort or danger to yourself or the goat.

## Removing Horns

My goats are dehorned and I have thought of getting polled (hornless) goats.



Some of the groups for meat breeds require that goats entered in their shows have their horns. Fiber producing goats usually keep their horns as it provides some temperature regulation for them.

In other circumstances and with some more aggressive breeds, letting them keep their horns increases the risk of injury to the goats, other animals and even people.

If you want your goats disbudded (horns removed), it should be done early in life.

Dehorning after that is a serious veterinary procedure and entails some risks.

That also applies equally to the procedure called “tipping” where just the tips of the horns are removed. Not recommended except if your veterinarian advises it or, at least, agrees that it is necessary in your particular circumstances.

Removing the horns very early is recommended for other goats because:

- 8 Horns can get caught in fences, feeders and other constructions with serious risk to the goat and the equipment if it is a large animal.
- 8 Doing anything with a horned goat, from milking to trimming their hooves or clipping their hair, requires more set-up, caution and time than if the animal does not have horns.
- 8 The damage which horned goats can do to other goats, including

smaller and weaker ones is obvious.

- 8 Your insurance is likely to be higher and the risk to other people and animals is much greater.
- 8 Except for the fiber breeds, horned goats usually have a lower market value.

Although it is a relatively simple procedure, you should not attempt it until after you have watched an experienced person do it and they have personally guided you as you do it on a live kid.

Use only professional quality equipment which is supplied specifically for use with goats.

You are working very close to the kid’s brain and other vital organs so great care is obviously required.

Never use a caustic paste instead of the iron. If even the smallest amount of the paste gets onto any goat except on the horn bump, it will cause significant burns or other injuries. Blindness has occurred many times. Pain will probably be greater than when using the iron even if there is no other damage.

## Hooves

The condition and care of a goat’s hooves are critical for its support and continued health, like a human’s feet. And, like our feet, they deserve regular attention but may be taken for granted until problems get to an advanced stage.

If a goat cannot walk properly because of the poor condition of its hooves, it could suffer serious ongoing problems.

The neglected hooves collect manure and other rubbish. In wet conditions, there is a greater risk of foot rot if the hooves are in poor condition.

Regular checks to remove muck from between the hoof sections can assist in keeping this in check.

Keeping the animal’s feet in good condition is something which most goat owners can learn to do satisfactorily in a short time.

But, I suggest that you get some personal instruction from a more experienced goat owner before going solo.

Some owners will not have to trim their goats’ hooves as often as others because their animals spend some time on hard surfaces such as rocks or gravel and the other person’s stock spend more time on pasture.

Some people build or adapt an unused structure on their property by adding some roof tiles or other hard surfaces to it and letting the goats climb all over it. If properly set up so that the risk to the goats is minimal, this can reduce the frequency of trimming and help burn off the goats’ almost limitless energy.

Checking the condition of the rear hooves may give a better guide to when a particular goat’s hooves should be trimmed because the animal will use its front hooves far more to manipulate things it finds, so they will tend to be a bit tidier.

Different owners use different implements to trim hooves. A pair of good quality shears which are specifically sold for hoof trimming is my suggestion. Keep them only for that purpose and check them before each use. They are not really expensive and good gear will reduce any problems.

The main thing to watch for is that you don’t cut into the tissue inside the

foot. Although instances of serious bleeding are rare, anywhere that any bleeding happens, there will also be an increased risk of infection because goats are always stepping in manure and other muck.

You should have “Blood Stop Powder” from your local feed store among the supplies in your “Goat First Aid Kit” and always have it ready when doing this sort of procedure. There are also many other preparations which various owners use and recommend but I stick with the store-bought one because it has never let me down and my goats are worth the low cost of the insurance which this gives them.

Some people will use a pocket knife or even a small pruner. I find the shears best for me because they seem to be less likely to cut my hand if the goat jerks aside during the trimming.

Always wear heavy duty gloves and heavy jeans or a leather apron but still keep your first aid kit handy.

Most people I know always secure the goat in a milk-stand or fence before starting the trim. That might not be necessary if your goats are very comfortable with the procedure but I think it’s good insurance.

## Desexing Male Goats

This is a necessary task because you do not need or want to have more than one or two male (buck) goats on your property.

Many owners don't have any. They have their does serviced by other people's bucks.

That is because:

- 8 Bucks smell most of the time, especially during the mating season. They also spray their urine on themselves as it can attract female goats. Most other creatures don't find it pleasant.
- 8 You must keep bucks separated from kids to prevent injuries or death of the kids and from does that you don't want them to breed with.
- 8 One buck can service several does.
- 8 Only the best quality bucks should be used for breeding or the breed will suffer and your herd will become devalued.
- 8 They are aggressive and not just when females are in heat.
- 8 They are more likely to cause damage to other animals, equipment, structures and people.
- 8 They're trouble.

The options with the males not needed for breeding are limited.

Most are killed for meat. Some are killed at birth and disposed of. Others are raised until they are weaned and then killed for meat. Some are raised to adults and then sold for meat.

Some are sold to be pack goats or as pets. The pets must have been desexed or they will become an unattractive, smelly and probably aggressive menace after just a few months!

As with most of the procedures I've listed, you should get personal instruction. Because this is a very intrusive procedure, you need to watch and then be watched by some experienced person that can ensure you cause no more pain to your goat than absolutely necessary and also can be there if there is a problem.

**There are three common methods:**

***Castration:***

This is a procedure which requires great care and is probably riskier than either of the others listed here. Either get your vet to do it all the time or get some quality training from them or a very experienced goat owner.

***Burdizzo Tool:***

This implement, invented by a Dr. Burdizzo, is used to crush the spermatic cords. The tool should be used on one cord at a time. Again, personal instruction from an experienced user is strongly recommended.

***Elastic Banding:***

This process also involves a specially designed tool called an Elastrator<sup>®</sup> from Heiniger AG of Switzerland, which is used to stretch a small, thick rubber ring and position it tightly around the scrotum and above the testes.

Make sure that no other part of the kid is inside the ring.

Remove the Elastrator<sup>®</sup> implement.

This is a bloodless procedure when done correctly. You should, as with the other procedures, not attempt this yourself until you have had some personal instruction and done some under close supervision.



## Identifying Your Goats

Identifying your stock has traditionally been required for reducing theft and for identifying them when they were exhibited or sold.

With the emphasis on bio-security and the need for tracking the source of meat and other products which are involved in disease outbreaks, the need has become a strongly enforced legal requirement.

The method to be used for goats of certain breeds when they are registered is set by the organization which oversees that breed. Confirm with the appropriate organization for your particular breed as to what they specify.

**Micro chipping** is becoming the preferred system because of its simplicity and the reduced likelihood of the identification being altered or removed, either deliberately or accidentally.

### **Micro Chipping:**

I am not sure if the goat owner can do this procedure themselves in all countries. Some may require it be done by a licensed veterinarian.

You will need someone to show you the procedure and supervise your first implantings, but the basic procedure is fairly simple.

### **Tagging**

This is most used by the meat breeds but tattoos or microchips may be required as well in your jurisdiction. Tags are simple to insert with the proper equipment but they are also easier to remove accidentally or deliberately so they are not as secure a method of identification as the others shown here.

If tags are ripped out, the goat's ear can be scarred which affects its appeal if it is to be exhibited.

### **Tattooing**

This is harder to fake or remove than tagging but there are a few potential problems which can make tattoos ineffective. So, personal instruction and supervision of your first tattooing efforts are a very good idea.

You need a kit for doing the tattooing.

This will have the tattooing tongs, numbers and letters which are used in

the tongs and ink.

Your first step is to get the numbers which you must use.

Then, you need to confirm the specific size of the tattoos which the organization overseeing your breed of goat requires.

Black ink is usually supplied with the kits but you will need a different color if it does not show up on your dark skinned goats.

The tattoos can be applied in the goat’s ear or under its tail. This is the place used for the Lamancha goat and any others which have very small ears.

Always use gloves or you will have ink on your hands for days.

Load the tongs and check the numbers are correct.

Have someone hold the end of the ear which you will tattoo so that you have as firm a surface as possible for the tongs.

Check that the tongs won’t pierce any veins when they are applied.

Squeeze firmly. If some of the points don’t register, the tattoo will be useless.

Apply the ink with the finger of your glove or a sterilized soft toothbrush.

Reset the number and do your next tattoo.

## **Your Veterinarian**

### **Choosing Your Veterinarian**

This needs to be an early priority when you are still in the early stages of developing your plan and long before you get your first goat.

The veterinarian you choose should have as much personal, recent, direct experience with goats as possible.

Vets with no recent practical experience with goats are not as useful for you. Goats really are significantly different than dogs and other domestic animals and most other creatures too. That is something you will see proven repeatedly.

You will learn to do some basic procedures yourself as your experience develops, but your veterinarian will remain a vital part of whatever success you have with your goats.

If you cannot find a vet with recent relevant experience yourself, invest some time and effort in finding other ways to get to the best option available to you.

As well as asking other goat owners who they use, check with Veterinary Associations, Agricultural colleges (they may have some students that have some experience because they see it as a growing area of specialization) and any other places which have goats (don't forget petting zoos and other children's entertainment venues).

### **Should You Call the Vet?**

Many pet owners do not notice problems which are developing in their pets even though they spend hours with them each day.

They watch the animals but they don't observe them closely enough to recognize changes which might be significant.

For the sake of your business and the health and welfare of your goats, you need to be an observer. This will help you to catch most important changes at an early stage. This might save your goats' lives in some circumstances. It will also help to improve your powers of observation which can be useful in all areas of your life.

The signs which I use as possible signals of illness in goats include:

***Cold symptoms:***

A runny nose, discharge from the eyes or a cough will usually have me reaching for the phone.

***Change in Behavior:***

When a goat becomes less sociable or more aggressive, there has to be a reason. Has there been a change in its position in the group? If not, it may not be feeling well enough to continue its usual pattern.

Eating more is usually a good sign. Eating or drinking less would probably be a warning sign.

***Change in bowel movements:***

Examining any animal's excretions will often give clues to its general health. If a goat produces sloppy poo instead of the usual neat pellets, a closer check and any required action should be done as soon as possible.

You can collect some fresh pellets from any goat which you are concerned about and have them checked for parasites. Ask your Vet or local agricultural service for the steps they suggest you take.

***Temperature:***

Just as with humans, changes in our temperature can be significant.

A goat's temperature is commonly 102 degrees to 103 degrees Fahrenheit but some goats may be up to an extra degree either side of those marks.

There will also be variations if you take their temperature in hotter than usual weather.

Taking a goat's temperature is something every goat owner needs to learn to do properly so that you can do it as required without calling the Vet which would get expensive and be a poor use of their time.

You can use a digital or glass thermometer from your agricultural supplier. Swab the thermometer with some alcohol and apply a little petroleum jelly to the probe. Then, insert it gently no more than a couple of inches into the goat's rectum.

Always get your Vet or a more experienced goat owner to demonstrate the procedure and give you detailed instructions which relate to your type

and size of goats. Then, get them to supervise you so you get it right every time.

A high temperature, runny nose and a cough might indicate pneumonia where you need professional advice and antibiotics.

Some owners are confident and experienced enough to administer certain medicines themselves, but always get the Vet’s advice about dosages and whether any other treatment, such as isolating the infected animals is required.

Don’t confuse an occasional cough with a persistent one. Some conditions in the goat’s environment, such as certain feed may cause them to cough occasionally. That’s probably okay but bouts of coughing should always be checked so you can if necessary, take early and effective action.

## Resources

Use of any information from this list is at your sole risk.

Web sites change content and ownership without notice.

Hackers do take over sites or plant malicious software or links on them.

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### Groups

Information about these Groups is from their websites.

#### *U.S.A.*

##### **American Dairy Goat Association (ADGA)**

<http://www...www.adga.org/> Since 1904.

“The largest and fastest growing dairy goat organization and registry in the United States. We hope that you let ADGA help provide the resources you need to be successful.”

**The American Meat Goats Association** This association seems to be folding. Their site <http://www.meatgoats.com/> and others associated with it are listed for sale.

##### **The American Goat Society, Inc.** (Registry)

<http://www.americangoatsociety.com/>

The American Goat Society, Inc. was founded in 1935. In 1937, AGS merged with the International Dairy Goat Record Association, which had been established in 1925: so some of the pedigree records of AGS go back more than 80 years.

#### *United Kingdom*

British Goat Society Founded 1879.

<http://www.allgoats.com/>

The aims of the Society are:

- To circulate knowledge and general information upon goats.
- To extend and encourage the keeping of goats.
- To improve the various breeds of goats.
- To safeguard against cruelty from whatever source

An extensive list of Clubs and relevant information is at

<http://www.clubcorner.co.uk/countrybreeds/goatclubsuk.htm>

I have not checked the individual entries.

### *Australia*

#### **The Boer Goat Breeders Association Of Australia (BGBAA)**

<http://www.australianboergoat.com.au/>

"The BGBAA is the breeders association in Australia. It oversees the development of the Australian Boer goat towards the commercial exploitation of the superior meat production characteristics of the Australian Boer goat."

#### **The Goat Industry Council of Australia**

<http://www.gica.com.au/>

The Goat Industry Council of Australia is the peak national body representing the interests of goat producers. The Council's objective and purpose is to represent and promote the national interests of Australian goat meat, fibre and dairy producers.

### **Reference**

#### *Poisonous Plants*

"A Guide to Plant Poisoning of Animals in North America by Anthony P. Knight.

<http://www.amazon.com/Guide-Plant-Poisoning-Animals-America/dp/1893441113>

This is widely recommended, especially for owners of goats and other animals in the U.S.A.

## Wendy's Words.

I envy you because you are just starting your association with these wonderful creatures.



You will have many enjoyable and memorable moments as you spend more time with them and get to meet the wonderful people who make the world of goat-keeping such an exceptionally

friendly and supportive place, wherever you are in the world.

I hope that all your days are full of smiles and wonderful discoveries and that your venture with goats gives you more success than you even dream of at this point.

***Wendy Hargreaves***



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