

How to Raise Small Ruminants Profitably and Sustainably

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Why Sheep or Goats

- Suited to small farms, seniors and women
- Good meat market
- Low start-up cost
- Co-species grazing with cattle or horses
- Early puberty and high reproductive rate

Profitable Niches for Sheep or Goats

- Vegetation control on unused land
- Control of brush, weeds and sericea lesp.
- Integrated with cropping systems
- Rotation between pasture and cropland
- Grazing cover crops
- Grazing crop residues

Suitability of Sheep and Goats for Homestead

- Provide meat for family
- Provide milk/cheese/yogurt/soap
- Provide fiber for spinning
- Companion animal



Resource Requirements

- Windbreak/shade
- Fencing
- Water
- Land



Which Small Ruminant?

- Goats-brush/companion animal
- Sheep-hair or wool grass and weeds
- Dairy goats family milk
- Cashmere goats and wool sheep for fiber

Sources of Sheep and Goat Information

- Individual producers
- Producer groups
- University and extension
- Internet



Visit Goat Producers

- Why do they have sheep or goats?
- What is their animal management plan-breeding season, kidding date, weaning, pastures, fence, wintering, and predators
- What is their health program-vaccination, diseases treatment/prevention, worms
- Animal sales
- What are their animal facilities

Producers Group

- Locate breed associations and clubs on internet
- Meet other producers
- Participate in educational activities
- Locate sources of animals
- Many have web sites such as <http://www.katahdins.org>

University and Extension

- Most States have a State Sheep and Goat Specialist
- Some local extension educators know something about goats or sheep
- University web sites such as www.luresext.edu
- Meat Goat and Dairy Goat Handbook
- ATTRA website

Visit Sheep and Goat Auctions

- Meet other goat producers
- What do goats sell for
- Quality factors
- Seasonal price patterns
- What to look for in an animal
- NOT source of breeding animals

Internet Information

- Lot of good information and disinformation on the web.
- No responsibility for information
- University and breed organizations are most reliable sources
- List servers for goats, meat goats, wool sheep and hair sheep. eXtension website
- www.sheepandgoat.com

Important Considerations in Goat Production

- Parasites (worms)
- Predators
- Fencing



Predator Problems

- Neighborhood dogs
- Coyotes
- Less common
- Bobcat, cougar, wolves, bear, feral hogs, eagles, black-headed vultures and ravens

Predators Protection

- Guard dogs
- Donkeys and Llama
- Night lot
- Electric fence
- Federal trapper



Internal Parasites

- Worm control program
- Problem of dewormer resistant worms
- Cull wormy animals
- Fecal egg counts or check eye color
- Internal parasite workshop
- Need to know more about worm management than sheep or goat management

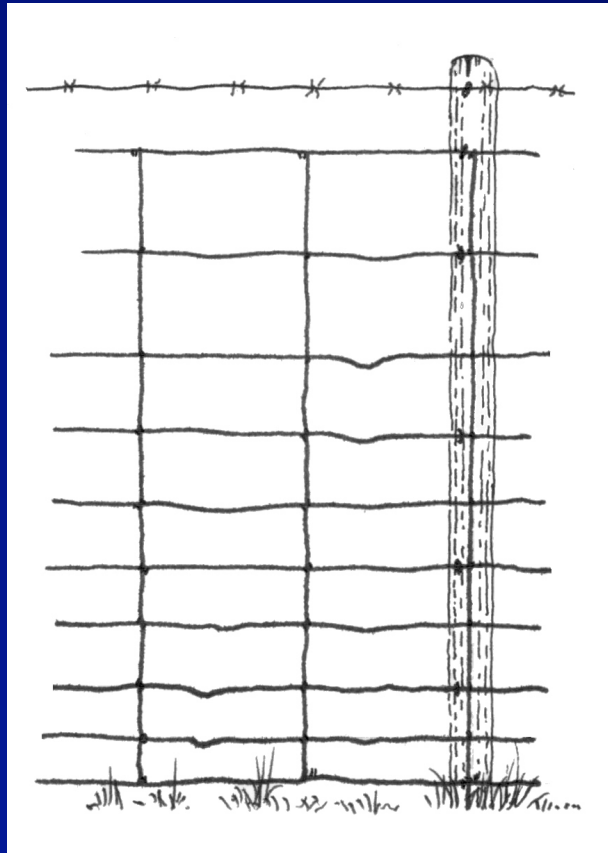
Internal Parasite Management

- Don't graze close to the ground
- Moderate stocking rate
- Rotational grazing rest period > 35 days
- Hay pastures
- Sericea lespedeza and browse helps
- Some breeds/individuals are more resistant to worms than others
- www.wormx.info



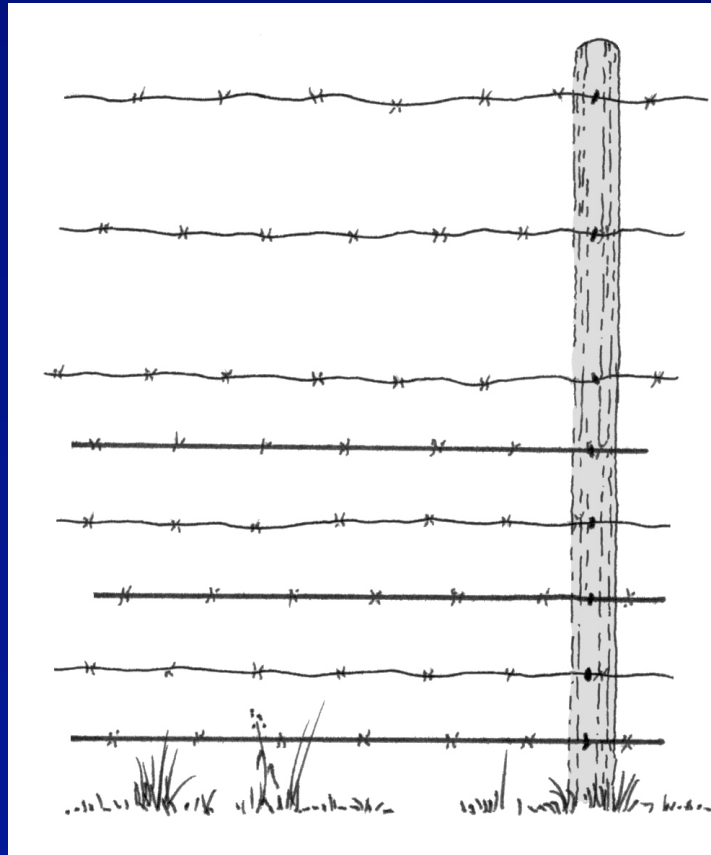
New Fences

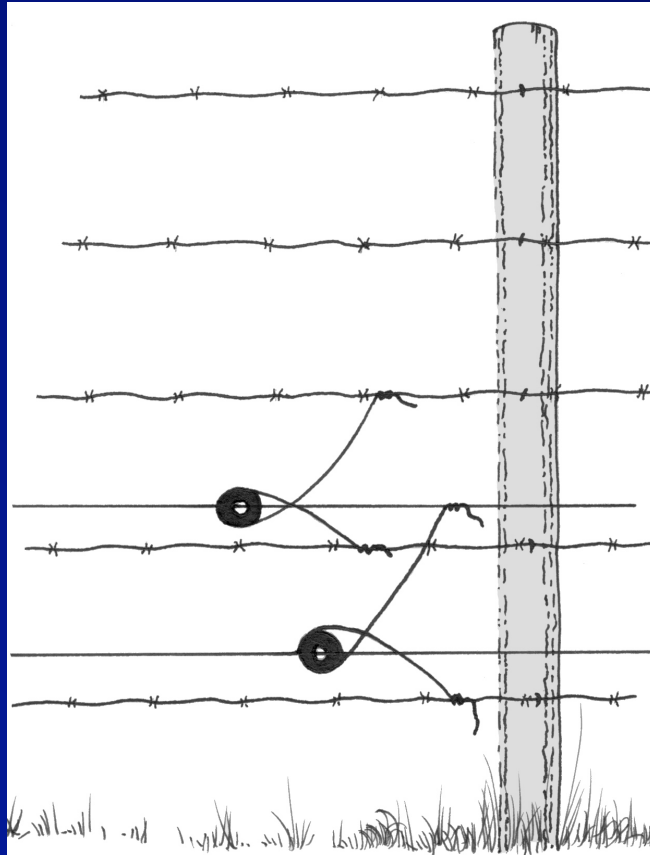
- Net wire fence with barbed wire on top
\$6,000/mile materials
- Sheep and Goat wire 1047
- High Tensile Goat Tuff net wire
- Electric Fence 4 strand 30" high
- \$2,000/mile

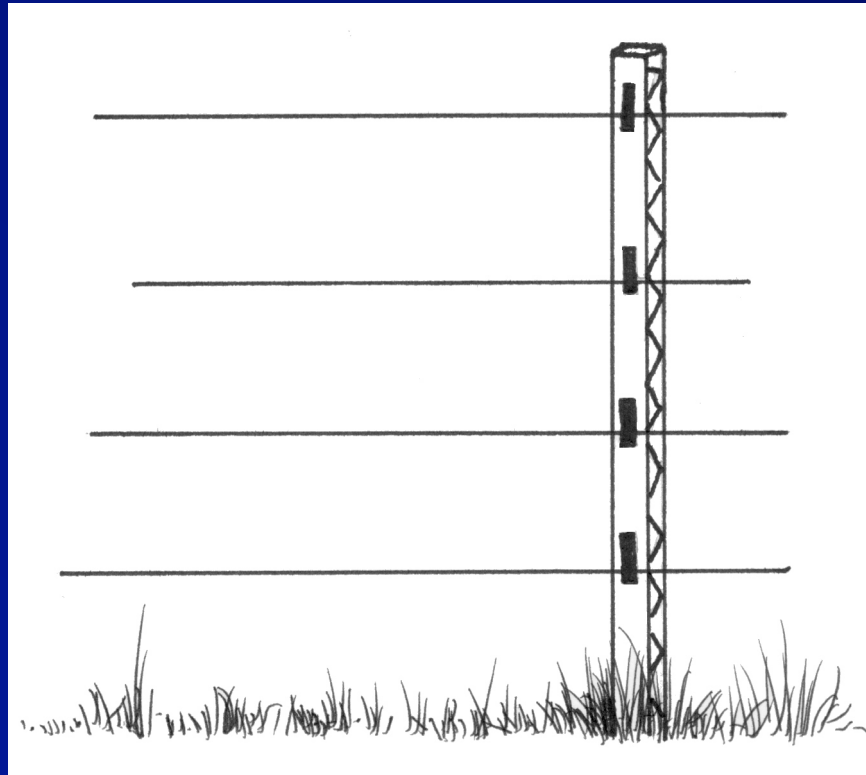


Converting Old Fences

- Sheep and Goat wire
- 3 extra strands of barbed wire & stays
- 1 or 2 strands of electric fence on outriggers







Rules for Electric Fence

- Put up with quality materials
- Train animals to it
- Daily, check and maintain 4500 V

Miscellaneous SR Knowledge

- Goats require copper, sheep little copper
- Require fiber (forage/hay) in the diet
- Susceptible to coccidiosis-usually stress and lack of sanitation
- Internal parasite/dewormer resistance

Keys to Preventative Health

- Good nutrition
- Minimize stress
- Vaccinate
- Control worms
- Cull
- Biosecurity - Don't bring germs in



Vaccination

- Enterotoxemia 'Overeating' Tetanus
- Caseous lymphadenitis "Cheesy gland"
- Prior to weaning
- Four weeks later
- Annually 4 wks before kidding/lambing
- Bucks annually
- Abortion diseases as per vet prescription

Production Cycle

- Breed Nov 15
- Vaccinate mid-March
- Kid April 15 when forage is available
- Wean September
- Castrate?
- Market?



Sample Goat Wintering Programs

- Forage-stockpiled pasture or hay
- Feed round bales in a hay feeder
- Range cubes, pellets or whole corn
- Appropriate mineral supplement
- Need some supplemental feed in early lactation.
- Need to know more about pasture management than animals

Getting Ready for Goats

- Visit goat producers, auctions
- Collect information from the Web
- Extension and producers groups
- Make a business plan and budget
- Buy from a reputable producer
- Be prepared for arrival of goats

Make a Business Plan

- Reason for having goats
- Plan your production cycle
- Plan your production goals
- Develop contingency plans for drought or disease outbreaks
- Budget using production cycle and goals

Sample Meat Goat Budget

- Income
- 1.5 kids/doe weaned
- -.25 kids for replacement
- 1.25 kids to sell
- 55lb kid @\$2.00/lb*1.25 = 137.50.
- .20 cull for \$60.00 = 12.00
- Total Income \$149.50

Meat Goat Budget Expenses

- Fencing \$5.-10./hd
- Pasture 5.-20.
- Health 4.-8.
- Buck service 5.-8.
- Replacement 5.-20.
- Winter feeding 10.-30.
- Minerals & water 6.-12.

Meat Goat Budget Summary

- Income \$149.50
- Expenses \$40. - 108.
- Profit \$109.50 – 41.50



Purchase from Reputable Producers

- Locate breeders with your type of production system and breed
- Select healthy, physically sound animals
- Expect to pay more than auction price
- Start early locating animals
- Expect more problems with animals bought from auctions
- Start small 20-30 hd

Prices for Quality SR

- Doe or ewe female \$200-400.
- Buck or ram \$400-600.
- Young buck can service 25-35 does.
- Young ram can service 20-25 ewes.
- Mature buck can service 40-75 does.
- Mature ram can service 40-50 ewes.

Locate Sources of Feed and Supplies

- Visit local feedstore/ag supply
- Dewormer, vaccine, medicine, corral panels, feeders, waterers etc.
- Locate feed/hay
- Mail order vaccines/dewormers
- Only buy what you have to!

Prepare for Animal Arrival

- Pasture fenced for goats
- Predator control
- Waterers/feeders
- Vaccination/deworm
- Handling facilities
- Coccidiosis prevention

Conclusion

- Get informed
- Get planned
- Get ready
- Get sheep or goats