



MARKETING MEAT GOATS

Meat goat production is gaining popularity in many areas of Pennsylvania. Goats are gentle, easy to control, and adapt well in situations of limited resources. The demand for goat meat by the East Coast ethnic population makes goat meat very marketable.

Goat kids are usually marketed at four to five months of age or before weaning. Some marketing options may consist of direct marketing off the farm, supplying goat meat to a specialty market such as a holiday or ethnic group, or producing kids for a commercial marketing firm. Success is often a reflection on how well a producer tends to all aspects of breeding,

health, management, and marketing. All these factors have their respective role in producing and marketing a quality product.

In addition to direct marketing to ethnic groups, there are two other potential niche markets for goat meat: target markets serving health-conscious consumers wanting low-fat diets and the restaurant trade serving ethnic or gourmet foods featuring goat meat. These markets are largely untapped and can provide some real opportunities, especially for producers within the immediate radius of these markets.

Like goat's milk and cheese, the meat is unique in flavor and palatability. It is leaner than

many other red meats and usually less tender. However, its leanness has a place in today's demand for meats with less fat.

Goat meat is termed either cabrito or chevon, depending on the age of the goat at slaughter. Cabrito (Spanish for "little goat") is from kids slaughtered within the first week after birth. Its main use is for barbecue meat, and is highly sought after by certain ethnic groups.

Chevon, on the other hand, is from older goats, yet kids slaughtered near to or after weaning. Of these two meat-types cabrito is the more tender. Older (mature) goat meat is used primarily in processed meats such as goat sausage, frankfurters, bologna, and chili con carne.

Spring Chores For Shepherds

Following are ideas that every shepherd should consider this spring.

- Fertilize your pastures. Pasture is crop just like corn or soybeans. In order to remain productive a pasture must be fertilized every year, preferably twice a year. Without fertilizer to keep pasture grasses strong, weeds and grazing will eventually degrade the pasture until it

is no longer productive. In the absence of a soil test, a good rule of thumb is to fertilize with 500 pounds per acre of a 10-10-10 fertilizer in the spring and again in the fall.

- Deworm the flock. Internal parasites are the number one health problem in sheep. You should be on a regular deworming schedule of 4-5 times per year. We like to worm sheep just prior to putting them on new pasture. This helps control the spread of these parasites. Remember to rotate worm medications. Don't just change the name of the wormer but make sure it is a different family of medication. If in doubt, check with your veterinarian.

- Call your shearer. Don't wait until the last minute to have your sheep shorn. If the weather turns very cold and wet immediately after shearing, provide shelter for a couple of days. After that, there is enough wool growth to protect them. Sheep in this area should be sheared by mid-May.

Rodent Control In Swine Facilities

Rats and mice can be a major economic threat around swine facilities. They consume and contaminate feed and cause feed losses through the gnawing of holes in feed sacks and wooden bins. They may also be responsible for maintaining or spreading swine diseases.

House mice, Norway rats, and roof rats as a group are considered the most troublesome and economically important rodents in the United States. Norway rats will undermine the building foundations and concrete slabs. Roof rats and house mice, in addition to Norway rats, are particularly destructive to building insulation.

Most common types of insulation including rigid foam and fiberglass are susceptible to rodent damage. A rodent infestation can damage structures by thousands of dollars in a matter of months. Additionally, rodents may gnaw on electrical wiring causing equipment to malfunction, power outages, and potentially dangerous short circuits.

Droppings, tracks, burrows, pathways, and fresh gnawings, including rodent-damaged feed sacks, indicate areas where rodents are active. Around swine facilities, insulated walls and ceilings are common nesting locations for rodents, especially mice.

Effective control involves sanitation, rodent-proof construction and population reduction. Reduction techniques include trapping, poisoning, and fumigation.

Effective Fence Tips

For effective animal control, wire spacing is more important than fence height. More animals go through and under fences than over them. Proper wire

spacing makes your fences more effective.

Regardless of how many wires your fence has, always position one wire at the shoulder height of the animal to be controlled. This is the "nose wire" that your animals see and touch when they approach the fence. Other fence wires should be spaced according to the type of animal: 10-12 inches apart for cattle and horses, 6-8 inches for sheep and goats. The bottom wires should be closer together than the top wires.

Fences taller than 48 inches aren't really necessary. In many countries, livestock fences are seldom more than 42 inches tall. Electric fences can be even lower — 36 inches for cattle and horses and 30 inches for sheep and goats. Shorter fences also allow closer wire spacing.

Multiflora Rose

The weed multiflora rose is an increasing problem in Pennsylvania pastures and non-cropland. It thrives on idle land, fencerows, and low maintained, hilly pastures. Originally introduced from Asia and promoted as a "living fence" to control erosion and provide food and cover for wildlife, multiflora rose quickly spreads and is considered a noxious weed in Pennsylvania and surrounding states.

Once multiflora rose is introduced, its aggressive growth can rapidly overtake desirable land, forming a dense, thorny thicket within a few years. Although the weed spreads mainly through seed dispersal by birds and other animals, it also spreads by layering. Layering occurs when the tip of the cane, or woody stem, touches the ground, forms a shallow root system, and generates a new shoot. Mature shrubs can grow 9 to 12 feet wide and 6 to 10 feet tall, producing many arching, thorny canes. Generally, the large compound leaves are each composed of seven to nine leaflets. Multiflora rose blooms during late May or June, producing up to several hundred white or pinkish flowers in clusters throughout the bush. Each flower yields a small, round fruit (hip) that changes from green to bright red upon maturity and contains seeds that can remain viable in soil for 10 to 20 years.

Noxious weed laws in Pennsylvania and other states require landowners to manage problem weeds, including multiflora rose. One-time control tactics are generally inadequate. Combinations of preventive, cultural, mechanical, biological, and chemical methods must be utilized to eliminate multiflora rose.

For information on multiflora rose control practices, contact your local county extension office and ask for "Penn State Agronomy Fact #46."

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