Goats and sheep: a weapon against weeds

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Topics

- Choosing animals
- Controlling animals
- Animal management
Choosing animals

- Species
- Breed
- Sex
- Age
- Condition
- Health
Species

- Goat
- Sheep
- Both
Goats

- Browsers
- Top-down grazers
- Selective grazers
- Can tolerate secondary compounds
- Very agile
- Can reach high-growing forage
- Will destroy young trees
- Don’t like to get wet
- Can be hard to contain
- Harder to handle
Sheep

- Intermediate grazers
- Readily consume grass
- Prefer forbs (broadleaf weeds)
- Selective grazers
- Graze close to the ground
- Avoid wet areas
- Easier to handle
- Easier to contain
Breed

• Some breeds have different grazing preferences.

• Larger framed animals will have a higher browsing line.

• Breeds vary in their management needs and tolerance to environmental stresses and disease challenge.

• There are more differences among breeds than between breeds.

→ Crossbreds tend to be hardier.
Sex

Females and wethers (neutered males) are usually easier to handle than intact males.

• Intact male goats have an offensive odor during the rutting season.

• Don’t mix intact males with females.
Age

• Lambs and kids learn to eat from their dams.

• Lambs and kids are more likely to try novelty foods.

• Lambs and kids have higher nutritional requirements.

• Lambs and kids are less tolerant of environmental stresses and disease challenges.

• Older animals are easier to handle and move.
Condition

- Horns
- Status
- Health
Horns

- Horned animals are usually more difficult to handle than polled (or disbudded) animals.

- Horns can get entangled in fences and feeders.

- Horned animals need more space.

- Horned animals will dominate polled animals.

- **Should not** mix horned and polled animals.

- Most common breeds of sheep do not have horns.
Status

- Growth
  → Maintenance
- Early to mid-gestation
- Late gestation
- Early lactation
- Late lactation
Health

• General appearance
  – Hair coat
  – Body condition
  – Thriftiness

• Disease status
  – External parasites
  – Internal parasites
  – Hoof health

• Vaccinations
  – Clostridial diseases
  → Rabies
Where to locate breeders and purchase animals

→ Companies that offer fee-based grazing services.

• Recommendation from local county extension office.
• Web sites
• Online directories
  – www.sheepgoatmarketing.info
• Listings in farm publications
• Public livestock auctions
• Free
  – Give-aways
  – Rescue animals
Controlling animals

- Transportation
  → Containment (fencing)
- Handling
Fencing options

• Permanent
  – Woven wire or net fencing
  – High-tensile, electric

• Temporary, portable
  – Electric smooth wire
  – Polywire, tape, rope
  – Electric netting
Permanent fencing

Traditional net wire
• Physical barrier
• Off-set wires to keep predators out and livestock away from fence.
• More expensive

High-tensile, electric
• Psychological (and physical?) barrier
• 4 to 8 strands, properly-spaced wires
• Less expensive
Temporary (portable) fencing

Electric
smooth, polywire, tape, rope
• 1 to 3 wires
• Single or multi-wire rolls
• Step-in posts
• Least expensive type of fencing
• Physiological barrier only

Electric netting
• Different configurations and heights
• Comes in standard size rolls.
• Physical/physiological barrier
• Predator proof
• More expensive
Handling options

**Low-stress**
- Work in harmony with their natural behavior
- Working pens
- Chute
- Restraint
- Foot bath

**Train them**
- Collars
- Halters
- Grain as motivation

**Manhandle them**
- Push
- Drag
- Pull
- Grab horns

**Don’t handle them**
- What are the consequences of not handling them?
Animal management

- Water
- Shelter / shade
  - Natural
  - Portable
- Predator control
  - Fencing
  - Guardians (?)
- Nutritional
  - Minerals
  - Other supplementation?
- Health
  - Parasites
  - Hooves
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