

No one should forget old  
friends and old goats.  
- Faroese Proverb



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# All About Goats



A simple, silly guide to everything GOATS.

- compiled by Meagan Frederick ©2020

# Some Goat Information

Just in case you wanted  
to share with friends, remember what you  
learned, or as a keepsake!

Goats are among the earliest animals domesticated by humans, over 10,000 years ago, and have been used for milk, meat, fur, skins, packing and companionship across much of the world.

The goat is a member of the animal family Bovidae and the subfamily Caprinae, meaning it is closely related to sheep.



## Goat terms:

**Female:** Doe

**Males:** Buck or Billy

**Males that have been neutered:**  
Wether

**Goat baby:** Kid

**Group of goats:** Herd

**Gestation** length is  
approx. 150 days.

**Goats can live for 15-18 years!**

Goats require a minimum of 15 square feet of sheltered space and 200 square feet outdoors.

Miniature goats require 10 square feet of sheltered space and 130 square feet outdoors.



## What about the chickens?

Chicken are amazing creatures! Did you know...

- 🐣 Mother hens will "talk" to their babies while still inside their eggs. Chicks will then hatch knowing their mother's "voice". They are extremely devoted and protective of their chicks, hence the term "mother hen".
- 🐣 Chickens recognize faces and can distinguish over one hundred different individuals, both of humans and fellow chickens.
- 🐣 They also see more colors than humans can see, and form and remember meaningful color associations, as well as patterns and symbols. They have also been shown to have a sense of numbers and quantities, can anticipate future events, and can reason by deduction - similar to a 7 year old child!
- 🐣 Roosters will sacrifice their own lives to a predator such as a hawk to protect his family of hens.
- 🐣 Chickens have a language with over 30 separate distinct vocalizations. We love hearing our rooster call to the ladies when they find a good grub or sunflower seed .... they will call them over with a particular vocalization and let them eat first!
- 🐣 In the wild, chickens can live anywhere from 7 to 15 years, but on commercial farms that supply over 95% of the chickens killed for meat in this country, the birds are still babies when they are slaughtered at a mere 45 days old.
- 🐣 Chickens are one of the most abused animals on the planet and make up 98% of the land animals raised and killed in the US for food. That makes 9 billion chickens killed in the US alone, with more than 450 million of those killed by the egg industry. They undergo horrific condition at factory farms... yes, even the ones that claim to be "humane" and "cage-free"





## I want to have a goat! How do I get one?

Goats are social creatures. For quality of life, you should never have just one goat. Although sheep, cattle and donkeys can make good companions for a goat, the best is to have at least two goats together, preferably more. They are herd animals!



You should NEVER go to an auction for livestock. It perpetuates the gross mistreatment of farmed animals and you often get sick or diseased animals. Buying a goat also perpetuates the animal agriculture industry so please Don't shop, ADOPT! Many local farm animal sanctuaries accept applications to adopt animals in search of a forever home. See our list of recommended sanctuaries below.

And remember, Goats can live for 15-18 years and require a minimum of 15 square feet of sheltered space and 200 square feet outdoors (*miniature goats require 10 square feet of sheltered space and 130 square feet outdoors.*)

## I don't think my landlord would appreciate a pet goat. How else can I help rescue goats?

Make a donation or visit a sanctuary! There are quite a number of them out there, but these are three we have visited and have worked with in the past to get our rescued goats.



Woodstock Farm Sanctuary  
<http://woodstocksanctuary.org>



Catskill Animal Sanctuary  
<https://casanctuary.org>



Farm Sanctuary  
<https://www.farmsanctuary.org>



Goats are generally playful, curious and smart. Females are known for being incredibly patient, loving and nurturing moms. They are also agile and well known for their ability to climb and balance in precarious places. This makes them the only ruminant to regularly climb trees. Due to their agility and inquisitiveness, they are notorious for escaping their pens by testing fences and enclosures, either intentionally or simply because they are used to climbing. If any of the fencing can be overcome, goats will almost inevitably escape! Goats have been found to be quite intelligent and able to use complex communication with people in the same manner as domesticated animals such as dogs and horses.



According to recent research, goats can sense human emotion, similar to dogs and horses, and are more drawn to "happy" human faces than angry ones.

Similarly, in another research study, goats can also sense and respond to facial expressions in other goats as well!



# Types of Goats

Did you know that there are over 300 distinct breeds of goat around the world?!  
These are the breeds that currently reside with us.



## Alpine

Used for dairy, originating from the French Alps. Does can weigh up to 130 lbs and males up to 170 lbs. Alpines are a medium to large breed with a short/medium length coat, can easily adapt to a variety of climates and are known to be very friendly. They were brought to the US in the 1920s.



## Nubians

Used for dairy or meat, originating from Africa or Anglo-Nubian originating from Great Britain; Does can weigh up to 135 lbs and males up to 170 lbs. Nubians are known for their long floppy ears, silky hair and beautiful profile. Brought to the US in the 1920s, they are intelligent and inquisitive with endearing personalities. They are also very talkative!



## Saanen

Used for dairy, originating from Switzerland; Does can weigh up to 130 lbs and males up to 170 lbs. Came to the US in 1904 and were the first breed to be registered. Saanens are known to be strong, vigorous goats with loving personalities. They do better in cooler climates and they are predisposed to skin cancer due to their light coloring.



## Boer

Used for meat, originating from South Africa. Does can weigh up to 150-225 lbs, males up to 175-325 lbs. Boers are large-framed goats that also happen to be gentle, intelligent and easy-going.



# Who eats WHAT?!

Did you know that goats are the most eaten animal around the world? And goat milk is consumed around the world more than cow milk? Goats are easier and cheaper to manage than cattle, and have multiple uses, besides being exploited for meat or milk, such as pulling wagons or packing. Approximately 440 million goats are slaughtered each year for meat worldwide.

In the U.S., goat meat is marketed as "chevron", based on French words chevre (goat) and mouton (sheep). Baby goat meat is called "cabrito", based on the Spanish or Italian (capretto) words for "little goat". Like veal (baby male cows) and lamb (baby male sheep) "cabrito" is the unwanted males of the dairy industry.



# But I like goat cheese!



Goats are mammals, just like humans. For goats to produce milk, just like humans, they must give birth. Farms that produce goat milk and goat cheese will impregnate a female so that they begin lactating. The kids are then taken away from their mothers at just a few days old so that the farm can harvest the milk. Female babies are forced to reenter the dairy line. Male babies are considered expendable and are slaughtered or sold for meat. Dairy goats are often killed at just a few years of age when their milk production drops.

## Other Fun Goat Facts!



### Help! I'm Drowning!

Goats generally do not like water. They often find cover when it rains and will rarely wade through a stream or puddle!

### What the Fur?

When a goat is annoyed, his hair might stand on end, particularly around the spine. Also, goats wag their tails when happy or excited, just like dogs!



### What the Flehmening?

When a goat lifts his chin and curls his upper lip up and back, it's called flehmening. This exposes the vomeronasal organ in the roof of his mouth that helps him draw scents in and identify them.



### Picky Eaters?

Goats are fastidious eaters ... if food falls on the ground anywhere near urine or feces, they generally will not eat it!



## Miniature Breeds



### African Pygmy

Used for meat, originating from Central Africa. Does can weigh up to 35-60 lbs and males up to 45-70 lbs. Known as the quintessential pet goat, they have straight medium length hair and are agile, animated, good-natured and gregarious. They will grow to be no more than 23 inches tall.



### Nigerian Dwarf

Used for dairy, originating from West Africa. Does can weigh up to 30-50 lbs, males up to 35-60 lbs. Babies of this breed are born at just 2 pounds! They will grow to be a maximum of 21 inches in height.

## Whadayaknow?

### Why do goats eyes look different?

Their pupil is rectangular in shape so that their peripheral vision extends to 320 to 340 degrees. Humans can only see 160 to 210 degrees.

Goats also have keen night vision.



### How many stomachs do they have?

Four! Goats have four stomachs because they are ruminants and need these four specialized compartments to break down the plants they eat. The first compartment, the rumen, helps to ferment plant matter. They prefer to browse rather than graze, meaning they eat leaves, shrubs and weeds rather than grass.



## What else are they good at?



Goats have excellent hearing, an acute sense of smell better than humans, and almost twice as many taste buds! Contrary to popular belief, they don't eat everything. They can be very picky eaters and won't eat hay once it's fallen on the ground or drink water that has been fouled. My goats happened to hate celery, but they do like bitter tastes such as orange peels! They do use taste to explore their surroundings and are very curious!

However, they are also very smart, often avoiding poisonous plants naturally.

## How can you tell how old your goats are?

Their teeth! By examining the size of the eight teeth in the front of a goat's mouth, you can tell their age (approximately)

They can't bite!  
Did you know that goats don't have any upper teeth?

## Why do some goats lack horns?

Disbudding (dehorning) is removal of the sensitive, nerve-filled horn buds that will grow into horns, and is generally performed on goats at a very young age by burning the "bud" and surrounding tissue with a hot iron. Even "humane" farms disbud their goats to discourage injury to each other due to horns. We are really glad our goats have their natural horns, which they can use to play, fight and protect themselves!

## Why do goats butt horns?

Goats have a natural hierarchy, dependent on age, sex and personality and size of horns. Goats bump heads or butt horns to play,

but also to assume the dominant role in a herd.



Wednesday?

## Will goats eat my poison ivy?

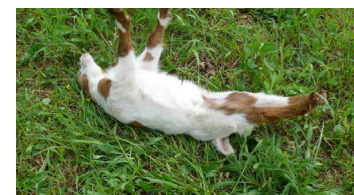
Goats have been used by humans to clear unwanted vegetation for centuries. And have been described as "eating machines". There has been a resurgence of this in North America since 1990, when herds were used to clear dry brush from California hillsides thought to be endangered by potential wildfires. This form of using goats to clear land is sometimes known as conservation grazing. Since then, numerous public and private agencies have hired private herds from companies to perform similar tasks.

This practice has become popular in the Pacific Northwest, where they are used to remove invasive species not easily removed by humans, like blackberry vines and poison oak. In the Southeast US, they have used goats to control kudzu, another invasive plant. Goats are known to eat poison ivy and sometimes eradicate it by destroying the plants by ripping it out from its roots. They do not seem to be bothered by the urushiol (the oily resin that causes rash and itching in humans) I wish someone would tell that to my goats ... they don't seem to like eating poison ivy at all! (darn!)



## Do goats really scream?

They can and do. They could be hungry, need attention or be in distress. Each goat has a unique voice and some breeds (like Nubians) are particularly vocal.



## How about those fainting goats?

This behavior is caused by a hereditary genetic disorder called myotonia congenita. This neuromuscular disorder makes muscles unable to relax after contraction. When they are startled, skeletal muscles contract and hold until they slowly release. Episodes seem to be painless and the goats remain awake until the stiffness passes. On average, a fainting episode can last anywhere between 5-20 seconds.