

COMMODITY

GOATS

Description

Goats are raised throughout British Columbia. Pockets of concentration occur in the South Coast and Southern Interior of the province. Herds are usually small with the exception of goat dairy farms where larger flocks are found. It is estimated that about 80% of the goats raised are used to produce milk.

Goats are produced for their milk and for the freezer meat market. Farms specialized in milk production would normally sell kids about one week old to be raised and fed on farms involved in fattening these for the meat market. See the Commodity specific Farm Practice on Dairy.

There are several breeds of goats used for meat or milk production or both. The Boer goat is the most popular meat breed and the Sanaan and Alpine are the most popular milk breeds. Nubia is a dual-purpose animal.

Goats are generally bred in fall and kid in spring, but some are capable of breeding throughout the year. It should be noted that the bucks emit an unpleasant odour especially during the breeding season, which last from August to January. Age at first breeding is between 9-14 months. Gestation period is about 150 days.

A number of breeds and their crosses are managed under a variety of systems appropriate to the type of goat, local climate and resources available to the producer. These systems include, but are not limited to range grazing, brush grazing, pasture grazing, and semi-confinement. Bucks, kids and does are usually kept on pastures during late spring, summer and late fall especially in areas where land is not costly. Animals are kept and fed indoors on some farms during winter, while on some other farms they are confined and fed under shelters.

Goats are more inquisitive than sheep, and by nature, are browsers and not grazers like sheep. Confining them in fences may be more of a challenge than keeping sheep in fenced pastures.

Farm Practices of Particular Interest

Practices for specific farm activities can be found in the Farm Practice section of this reference guide. Farm practices that are of particular interest to goat production include:

Animal Care and Handling

Presently there is no recommended code of practice for the care and handling of goats. The goat is a small ruminant like the sheep. The way in which they are raised is somewhat similar to sheep. Some of the recommended animal husbandry practices for sheep may be used for goats. They are detailed in the Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep.

See Farm Practice: [Animal Care and Handling](#)

Grazing

Goats may be pastured throughout the growing season. They may have access to pasture and range land 24 hours a day.

See Farm Practice: [Animal Care and Handling](#)

Legislation

Agricultural producers are expected to follow all legislation that pertains to their farming operation. The *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* stipulates that the farm operation must meet the *Health Act*, *Pesticide Control Act*, *Waste Management Act* and the regulations under those acts. Information on federal and provincial legislation can be found in Appendices B and C.

Acts that pertain to specific farm activities are listed in the farm practices section of this reference guide. Local government bylaws may also apply to some farm practices. Acts that are not referenced elsewhere that are of special interest to the keeping of goats include the following:

Federal

Health of Animals Act – Covers diseases that may affect animals or be transmitted

Provincial

Food Products Standards Act – Allows establishment of standards for processed foods

Meat Inspection Act – Regulation of animal slaughter and the sale of meat and meat by-products

Local Government

Applicable *Animal Control Bylaws* and *Noise Bylaws* where in place.

Publications

Publications that provide information on goat farming include, but are not limited to, the following (refer to Appendix D for details):

British Columbia Environmental Farm Plan Reference Guide

Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals - Sheep

Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals - Transportation