

GOATS FOR DAIRY PRODUCE



BRITISH GOAT SOCIETY INFORMATION LEAFLET NO 9

A goat is extremely efficient at converting food into milk. Weight for weight it is a more efficient milk producer than the dairy cow.

British dairy goats are some of the best in the world and are exported to many different countries. There is a choice of seven dairy breeds, which yield different amounts and quality of milk.

Goats' Milk

Hygienically produced goats milk tastes little different from cows milk. The difference lies partly in the size of the fat globules in goats' milk; these are smaller, allowing easier digestibility. This is particularly useful for the young, not just humans but animals of all species. The milk is also useful to those many people who are allergic to bovine products.

Goats' milk does not have to be pasteurised, as in this county, there is a very low incidence of tuberculosis in goats and the UK is free from brucellosis. However, as with all unpasteurised milk, it should be boiled before giving to children under 2 years old or to pregnant women.

Compared to cows' milk, goats' milk and its products are very white. Also the cream does not rise so readily due to the smaller fat globules. It can be used to produce a wide range of dairy products and has the advantage that, if frozen directly after milking, it will store well in this condition.

Milk production can be considered on two different levels:

- household
- commercial

Household Milk Production

The choice of breed here will depend upon the quantity of milk required. If you only require milk for the household and a small surplus in summer to make cheese and yoghurt, then two Toggenburgs or Golden Guernseys would be ideal, as one could raise its kids whilst the other provided for the house.

If, however, you also hope to rear the odd pig, calf, fatten poultry, or regularly make cheese, then a heavier yielding breed such as the British Toggenburg, British Saanen, Saanen or British Alpine would suit you.

If you are particularly interested in making yoghurt, butter and cheese, then the Anglo-Nubian, with its higher quality milk would be a good choice.

Daily yields for goats vary from 1 to 9 litres (2 to 16 pints) a day in summer to half that or less in winter, according to the breed and quality of goat you purchase.

There is almost no legislation affecting the production of milk and milk products that are for your own use. However, you do want to ensure your milk is produced as cleanly as possible. You will need to milk in a separate area that can be washed clean. Filter and cool the milk as soon as possible after milking. All utensils that come into contact with milk should be adequately sterilised.

For details of sterilisation and recipes for yoghurt, butter and various cheeses, purchase the booklet *Easy Dairying*, available from the British Goat Society (BGS).

Two household goats should be able to pay for their own keep by the value of the goods they supply to the household. However, if you do intend to get full value from your goats by making cream and cheese, you will have to invest in some equipment, but to start with, much can be done by adapting what you have to hand. Most books on the subject will give you some ideas. Some agricultural colleges and other training providers will run dairy and cheese making courses.

Commercial Milk Production

The term commercial in this context applies to anyone who sells milk or milk products. Produce you supply to paying guests or exchange for other goods is considered selling.

Once you are selling milk, which is a food product, you must comply with a considerable amount of legislation. The Food Safety Act 1990 applies to you if you live in England, Wales and Scotland. Separate legislation applies in Northern Ireland. The Dairy Products (Hygiene) Regulations 1995 specifically includes goats' milk and dairy produce and the requirements of this legislation must also be complied with. If you deliver milk, there are also regulations about the temperature of that milk.

Put very briefly, if you sell milk, particularly if it is to shops, milkmen or passing customers, you will need separate rooms for milking and milk processing, away from where your goats live. These areas must comply with all the current regulations that affect such things as surfaces, sinks and drainage. Milk will need to be regularly tested (for which you will have to pay) and your premises will be regularly inspected. If you are not on mains water, that will have to be tested too.

The Food Standards Agency in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are currently undertaking a consultation on the sale of raw milk. This practice is already banned in Scotland. It is currently legal to sell raw milk direct from the farm eg at Farmers' Markets or farm gate sales, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, but farms that do this are subject to more frequent testing and unpasteurised milk must be clearly labelled.

As you gather, most people, in order to sell milk, will have to make some capital expenditure to bring facilities up to the standard required by law. To justify this you will need sufficient sales. This means you are probably looking at a full-time job and a herd of at least 100 milkers. For this purpose, British Saanens are the most popular choice, although some of the other Swiss breeds can also be used efficiently.

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