

# Goat Farming

as an

**Alternative**

**Enterprise**

## BRITISH GOAT SOCIETY INFORMATION LEAFLET

Goats are clean, friendly, intelligent animals, which, once their needs are understood, are easily kept in good health and productivity. Their reputation for smelliness is only true of male animals in the breeding season; this can be reduced if desired by cauterisation of the scent glands on the head during the first week of life. This can be performed by a vet, usually at disbudding.

### GOAT DAIRYING

Five of the dairy breeds in the UK are suitable for commercial enterprises.

#### **Advantages over dairy cows:**

- \* A lower capital investment is required
- \* Goats are more prolific than cows being more efficient at converting food to milk
- \* Their droppings are pelleted so there is no slurry to handle
- \* The milk can be deep frozen
- \* Higher prices are charged for goats' milk, cheeses and yoghurts.

Goats' milk is similar in flavour to cows' milk but is easier to digest as the fat globules are smaller and a softer curd is formed in the stomach. It is therefore in demand for children and adults with delicate digestions, and for rearing orphan mammals of all species. Goats' milk and dairy produce can be consumed with great advantage by many of those children and adults who are intolerant of cows' milk. The potential market for speciality goats' milk cheeses is considerable.

#### **Advantages over dairy sheep:**

- \* The yield is higher
- \* The lactation is longer

800 litres per annum is the lowest viable yield, but well over 1,000 litres is obtainable under commercial conditions with good breeding, management and after the herd had had time to become fully established. Many goats will milk profitably under a regime of kidding only once in two years – though if kids are a requirement rather than milk, goats can breed twice a year in the presence of a male, there being a more



marked 'male effect' on the female's reproductive activity in goats than in sheep. However, this cannot be relied on and many herds use artificial lighting or intra-vaginal sponges and a hormone injection to extend the kidding season. A dry period of six to eight weeks is required prior to parturition.

### **Disadvantages compared to cow dairying:**

\*Every producer must find and keep their own markets for their milk, yoghurts, cheeses and other products.  
\*At one time the lack of technical information available to goat-farmers was a problem; this situation has improved slightly recently.

### **Legislation:**

The production and sale of goats' milk and associated products is governed by various regulations. It is important to be familiar with these and to keep abreast of changing legislation.

## **FLEECE PRODUCTION**

Two distinct fibres of commercial value are produced by goats: Mohair by Angora goats and cashmere by a variety of breeds.

**Angora** goats have a single coat produced by primary and secondary hair follicles alike, which appear to grow in 'ringlets' – the staples being defined by both character and style. Growth is continuous and shearing is carried out twice yearly. Mohair is lustrous and has many qualities attractive to the clothing industry and is also used for carpets, machinery belts, etc. Most animals produce a white fleece but black and other colours are available – the demand for them being mainly for hand spinning rather than industrial processing. Unfortunately the demand for mohair is subject to the whims of fashion. Some producers add value by spinning their output and producing high quality knitwear etc.



**Cashmere** is the underdown of certain double coated goats, being produced only by the secondary follicles, which are active during periods of shortening day length i.e. cashmere growth is complete by Christmas in our hemisphere. The crop is harvested in early spring by shearing, or by combing when the down is being naturally shed.

The growing interest in items of British manufacture is assisting the goat fibre market which places a high emphasis on quality.



### **MEAT PRODUCTION:**

One breed of goat, the Boer, has been developed as a meat breed, however the meat of all breeds is suitable for eating. Indeed it is necessary for many enterprises to sell surplus youngstock for meat to maximise profitability. Goats lay down fat within the body cavity rather than under the skin, so that the carcass is a good deal leaner than that of lamb; a good healthy eating point in its favour. Considerable effort is being put into developing the market for kid and goat meat in the UK. This should not be impossible as it makes good eating, although there is still some prejudice to overcome.

**The addresses of the various breed societies can be obtained from the British Goat Society.**

For further information contact:

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