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- **Prepare your homestead and build shelters**
- **Properly handle, feed, and care for your goats**
- **Raise goats for milk, meat, or as a family pet**

**Cheryl K. Smith**

*Expert on goat management and  
health care at [allexperts.com](http://allexperts.com)*



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FOR  
**DUMMIES®**

**by Cheryl K. Smith**



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## *About the Author*

**Cheryl K. Smith** has raised goats since 1998 when she got two Nigerian Dwarfes. She published *Ruminations, the Nigerian Dwarf and Mini Dairy Goat Magazine* from 2001 through 2007 and published the book *Goat Health Care* (Karmadillo Press) in 2009. She has written for *Dairy Goat Journal*, *Countryside*, and other magazines. Cheryl served as legal counsel for the American Goat Society (AGS) from 2003 to 2005 and on their board of directors from 2005 to 2009. She has also served on the boards of the American Nigerian Dwarf Dairy Association (ANDDA), the Northwest Nigerian Dwarf Dairy Goat Association (NNDGGA) and the Northwest Dairy Goat Herd Improvement Association (NDGHIA). She volunteers as a goat expert on [allexperts.com](http://allexperts.com). Cheryl lives in the community of Low Pass, located in the coast range of Oregon, with her herd of experimental miniature dairy goats, Mystic Acres Oberians.



## *Dedication*

This book is dedicated to Bob Kimball, who made it possible for me to focus on writing it. He built the structures in the book and helped me translate the steps into writing. But mostly he kept the farm going and the goats fed and happy while I gave most of my attention to this project. I couldn't have done it without him.

## *Author's Acknowledgments*

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I have been fortunate during my years as a goat owner to have a great community of other goat owners who shared their knowledge and experience with me. My number-one mentor, Stacy Morris, deserves a special thank-you for always being willing to share her wisdom. Stacy also served as the technical editor for the book, and I appreciate her time and expertise.

I also want to give a special thank-you to my acquisitions editor, Erin Calligan Mooney, for finding me to write this book and working with me on the preliminary proposal. Thanks to Barbara Frake and Kathryn Born for the illustrations that so aptly show you what the text describes. Last but not least, thanks to Traci Cumbay, my project editor, for guiding me through the process. We made a great team!

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# Contents at a Glance

---

<b><i>Introduction</i></b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b><i>Part I: Getting Acquainted with Goats</i></b> .....	<b>7</b>
Chapter 1: Discovering the Joys of Raising Goats .....	9
Chapter 2: Glimpsing Vital Goat Statistics.....	21
Chapter 3: Knowing Your Capra Aegagrus Hircus (Goat, That Is) .....	35
Chapter 4: Getting Your Property Ready for a Goat.....	53
<b><i>Part II: Bringing Your Goats Home</i></b> .....	<b>67</b>
Chapter 5: Home Sweet Homestead: Sheltering Your Goats.....	69
Chapter 6: Dinner Time: What and How to Feed Your Goats.....	83
Chapter 7: Getting Your Goats: Choosing, Buying, and Bringing Goats Home .....	103
Chapter 8: Working with Your Goats .....	117
Chapter 9: Handling Routine Care and Important One-Time Tasks .....	137
<b><i>Part III: Glimpsing Goat Health and Breeding</i></b> .....	<b>159</b>
Chapter 10: Outlining Basic Health Care Requirements .....	161
Chapter 11: Addressing Common Health Problems and Ailments.....	181
Chapter 12: Breeding and Looking After Pregnant Goats .....	203
Chapter 13: Now Comes the Fun Part: Kids!.....	219
<b><i>Part IV: Living Sustainably and Making Money from Your Goats</i></b> .....	<b>239</b>
Chapter 14: Discovering Goat Milk: How to Get, Use, and Sell It .....	241
Chapter 15: Goat Meat: From Breeding to Selling and Beyond.....	255
Chapter 16: Further Benefits of Goats: Fiber, Breeding, Weed Control, and More .....	271
<b><i>Part V: The Part of Tens</i></b> .....	<b>291</b>
Chapter 17: Ten Common Mistakes First-Time Goat Owners Make.....	293
Chapter 18: Ten Tips for Showing Your Goat.....	299
Chapter 19: Ten Misconceptions about Goats.....	305
<b><i>Appendix: Goat-Milk Recipes</i></b> .....	<b>311</b>
<b><i>Index</i></b> .....	<b>325</b>



# Table of Contents

---

<i>Introduction</i> .....	1
<i>Part 1: Getting Acquainted with Goats</i> .....	7
<b>Chapter 1: Discovering the Joys of Raising Goats</b> .....	<b>9</b>
Finding Goat Basics .....	9
Glimpsing the Benefits of Owning Goats .....	10
Becoming more self-sufficient .....	11
Using goats for companions or helpers .....	14
Raising goats as a 4-H project .....	16
Determining Whether Goats Are for You .....	16
Devoting time and effort .....	17
Deciding which goats are right for your situation.....	17
Finding out about local ordinances.....	18
Knowing your neighbors.....	19
<b>Chapter 2: Glimpsing Vital Goat Statistics</b> .....	<b>21</b>
Doe, a Goat, a Female Goat.....	21
Taking a Look at Goat Anatomy.....	22
Parts of the body.....	22
The digestive system.....	23
Hooves.....	25
Teeth.....	26
Beards .....	27
Wattles .....	27
Eyes.....	27
Signs of a Healthy Goat .....	28
Noticing posture .....	28
Identifying the meaning of goat cries .....	29
Determining normal temperature.....	30
Using ruminations as a health indicator.....	31
Taking a goat's pulse.....	32
Counting respirations.....	32
Recognizing life expectancy .....	32
Using a Goat Scorecard to Evaluate a Goat.....	33



**Chapter 3: Knowing Your Capra Aegagrus Hircus (Goat, That Is) . . . 35**

Looking Into Dairy Goats .....	35
Standard dairy goat breeds .....	36
Miniature breeds .....	40
Discovering Meat Goats .....	45
Boer .....	45
Tennessee fainting goat .....	46
Kiko .....	47
Spanish goat .....	48
Newer crossbreeds .....	49
Investigating Fiber Goats .....	49
Angora .....	49
Cashmere .....	51
Miniature fiber goats .....	51

**Chapter 4: Getting Your Property Ready for a Goat . . . . . 53**

Figuring Out How Many Goats You Can Support .....	53
Making Sure Fencing Is Adequate .....	54
Running through types of fencing .....	55
Planning for gates .....	56
Protecting Your Plants .....	57
Considering which trees to protect .....	57
Making trees goat-proof .....	57
Protecting Your Herd .....	59
Putting hazards out of reach .....	59
Avoiding tethering .....	60
Providing a safe place to bunk down .....	61
Considering local predators .....	61
Using guardian animals for security .....	62
Removing poisonous plants .....	65

***Part II: Bringing Your Goats Home* . . . . . 67**

**Chapter 5: Home Sweet Homestead: Sheltering Your Goats . . . . . 69**

Outlining Shelter Types .....	69
Using an existing building .....	70
Building a shelter .....	71
Providing a Safe, Cozy Place for Goats to Bunk .....	72
Building a sleeping shelf in an existing barn .....	73
Using and maintaining bedding .....	76
Keeping Your Goats and Their Living Space Clean .....	78
Controlling flies and other bugs .....	78
Feed storage and ratproofing .....	79

**Chapter 6: Dinner Time: What and How to Feed Your Goats . . . . . 83**

- Goats Don't Eat Tin Cans: What and How to Feed ..... 83
  - Understanding the two types of feed ..... 84
  - Feeding hay and alfalfa..... 84
  - Using chaffhay instead of hay and alfalfa ..... 85
  - Feeding grain ..... 85
  - Following a feeding schedule ..... 87
  - Choosing organic — or not..... 87
  - Minerals are a must ..... 88
  - Supplemental feeds ..... 88
- Using Body-Condition Scoring to Fine-Tune Feeding..... 90
- Feeding for Special Cases ..... 92
  - Pregnancy ..... 92
  - Milking does..... 93
  - Kids ..... 93
  - Old goats ..... 93
- Getting the Basic Supplies ..... 93
  - Bowls ..... 94
  - Buckets..... 94
  - Water supply ..... 95
  - Mineral feeder ..... 96
  - Hay feeder..... 96
  - Storing feed..... 97
- Building a Simple Hay Feeder ..... 98
- Building a Mineral Block Holder..... 99

**Chapter 7: Getting Your Goats: Choosing, Buying, and Bringing Goats Home . . . . . 103**

- Choosing the Right Goats for Your Needs..... 103
  - Goats need company..... 104
  - Size matters ..... 104
  - Horns can hurt ..... 104
  - Registered or unregistered..... 105
  - Looks count: The basics of conformation ..... 105
- Finding Sources for Goats ..... 106
  - Visiting local feed stores..... 107
  - Reading the agriculture paper or thrifties..... 107
  - Checking out Craigslist ..... 107
  - Surfing breeders' Web sites..... 108
  - Joining registries and goat clubs ..... 108
  - Going where goat people congregate ..... 109
- Making Sure You Get a Healthy Goat ..... 109
  - Asking questions..... 109
  - Examining the goats ..... 110
  - Observing the home herd..... 111

Protecting Yourself with a Contract .....	111
Bringing Your Goats Home .....	113
Transporting your goats .....	113
Quarantining new goats .....	114
Watching for signs of stress .....	115

## **Chapter 8: Working with Your Goats . . . . . 117**

Identifying Normal Goat Behavior .....	117
Establishing a “pecking” order.....	118
Biting, butting, and mounting.....	119
Conducting Basic Training with Your Goats.....	121
Collars are not just decorations .....	121
Handling goats regularly.....	122
Walking goats on a lead .....	123
Teaching basic manners .....	124
Moving Up to Advanced Goat Training.....	125
Teaching tricks with a clicker .....	125
Using an obstacle course .....	126
Housebreaking .....	126
Preparing goats for packing .....	127
Training goats to pull a cart .....	129
Supervising Your Herd.....	131
Meeting their social needs.....	131
Evaluating the time you have to be home .....	132
Finding and training a reliable helper .....	132
Maintaining Physical Fitness.....	133
Walking with your goats .....	134
Furnishing your yard or pasture with toys .....	134
Taking Your Goats to Schools or Nursing Homes .....	135

## **Chapter 9: Handling Routine Care and Important One-Time Tasks . . . . . 137**

Grooming Your Goats .....	137
Brushing.....	138
Bathing .....	138
Clipping .....	138
Specialized clipping.....	140
Caring for Hooves.....	140
Preparing to trim.....	141
Trimming the hooves .....	141
Dealing with Horns .....	145
Horned or not? .....	145
The case for no horns on goats .....	146
When to disbud.....	146
How to disbud .....	146
Preventing and dealing with scurs .....	150

Castrating Your Bucks .....	151
The problem of poor Elmer, or why to castrate .....	152
Knowing when to castrate .....	152
Choosing a castration method .....	153
Identifying Your Goats: Microchipping and Tattooing .....	155
Choosing a method .....	155
Tattooing your goat .....	156
Microchipping your goat .....	157

## ***Part III: Glimpsing Goat Health and Breeding ..... 159***

### **Chapter 10: Outlining Basic Health Care Requirements . . . . . 161**

Recognizing Signs of Illness.....	161
Working with a Veterinarian .....	162
Finding a vet .....	163
Knowing when to call .....	163
Preparing for a vet visit.....	164
Working with a non-goat veterinarian.....	165
Building a First Aid Kit .....	165
The Straight Poop: Fecal Analysis .....	167
Giving Injections .....	169
Considering Vaccinations.....	171
Deciding whether to vaccinate .....	171
Looking into common vaccinations .....	172
Giving a vaccination .....	173
Keeping Health Records .....	173
Documenting important information .....	173
Keeping track of recurrent problems.....	174
Providing information for the vet .....	175
Tracking trends .....	175
Testing to Avoid Problems.....	175
Knowing what to test for.....	176
How to draw blood for a test.....	176
Knowing the Law Regarding Drugs in Food Animals .....	178

### **Chapter 11: Addressing Common Health Problems and Ailments . . 181**

Managing the Creepy-Crawlies .....	181
Controlling external parasites.....	182
Minimizing internal parasites.....	184
Helping keep parasite problems at bay .....	187
Acquainting Yourself with Goat Viruses and Infections.....	187
Caprine Arthritis Encephalitis Virus (CAEV) .....	188
Abscesses .....	189
Hardware disease .....	190

Johne's Disease .....	191
Listeriosis.....	191
Soremouth .....	192
Pneumonia .....	193
Wounds .....	194
Ringworm.....	194
Foot rot.....	194
Examining Feed-Related Problems .....	195
Scours.....	195
Bloat.....	196
Enterotoxemia .....	197
Nutrient imbalances .....	198
Poisoning .....	201

## **Chapter 12: Breeding and Looking After Pregnant Goats . . . . . 203**

Preparing for Breeding.....	203
Running Through Goat Mating Habits: Courting Is Crucial!.....	204
Identifying the season for goat love .....	204
Manners, or what to expect from your goat.....	205
Doing the deed .....	207
Housing a buck after breeding .....	207
Finding Breeding Solutions When You Have Only Does.....	208
The invaluable buck rag.....	208
Leasing a buck.....	209
One-night stands, or driveway breeding.....	209
Artificial insemination .....	210
Looking Into the Finer Points of Goat Pregnancy.....	210
Length of gestation .....	210
False pregnancy .....	211
Dealing with common pregnancy problems .....	211
Getting Ready for Kidding .....	214
Preparing the doe .....	214
Setting up a kidding pen.....	215
Being prepared with a kidding kit.....	215
Knowing when she'll kid (and what to do!) .....	216

## **Chapter 13: Now Comes the Fun Part: Kids! . . . . . 219**

Grasping the Basics of Kidding.....	219
Knowing what to expect from labor and birth.....	220
Handling multiples.....	223
Taking Care of Mother and Kids after Kidding .....	224
Caring for the new mother.....	224
Caring for newborn kids.....	225
The importance of colostrum .....	226
Dealing with kid problems.....	226
Tube-feeding a weak kid.....	229
Vaccinating .....	231



Feeding the Kids ..... 232  
 Deciding between hand-feeding or natural feeding ..... 232  
 Choosing milk ..... 233  
 Feeding individually or as a group ..... 233  
 Feeding schedule ..... 234  
 Introducing solid foods ..... 235  
 Weaning kids ..... 236

***Part IV: Living Sustainably and Making Money from Your Goats*..... 239**

**Chapter 14: Discovering Goat Milk: How to Get, Use, and Sell It . . .241**

Developing a Milking Routine ..... 241  
 Knowing when to milk ..... 242  
 Keeping the milk fresh ..... 243  
 Caring for the udder ..... 244  
 Preventing mastitis ..... 244  
 Keeping records ..... 245  
 Ending milking (Drying off) ..... 245  
 Getting a Grip on Hand-Milking ..... 246  
 Getting the supplies ..... 247  
 Running through the hand-milking process ..... 247  
 Using a hand-milking machine ..... 249  
 Using a Motorized Milking Machine ..... 249  
 Handling Milk to Keep It Clean and Fresh ..... 252  
 Straining the milk ..... 252  
 Cooling the milk ..... 252  
 Storing the milk ..... 252  
 Staying Legal While Selling Milk ..... 253

**Chapter 15: Goat Meat: From Breeding to Selling and Beyond . . . .255**

Getting the Basics of Raising Goats for Meat ..... 256  
 Cross-breeding standard dairy goats to produce meat goats ..... 256  
 Using your dairy goats for meat ..... 257  
 Selling Your Products ..... 257  
 Identifying potential buyers ..... 257  
 Selling goats ..... 260  
 Advertising ..... 262  
 Legal considerations ..... 263  
 Determining what to charge ..... 263  
 Using marketing terminology properly ..... 264  
 Slaughtering Goats ..... 265  
 Doing it yourself ..... 265  
 Using a licensed slaughter plant ..... 265  
 Hiring a mobile butcher ..... 266  
 Humanely slaughtering goats ..... 266

Using All of the Goat.....	267
Hide tanning .....	267
Animal feed .....	269
Using the organs for herd health check.....	269

## **Chapter 16: Further Benefits of Goats: Fiber, Breeding, Weed Control, and More . . . . .271**

Harvesting and Selling Fiber .....	271
Reviewing fiber types .....	272
Shearing: How and when.....	273
Processing the fiber.....	275
Spinning.....	277
Selling your fiber .....	278
Showing Your Goats .....	280
Finding shows.....	280
Preparing your goat for showing .....	281
Getting your supplies together .....	284
Earning more than just ribbons .....	284
Marketing at shows.....	285
Creating Mini Breeds.....	285
Offering Buck Service .....	287
Selling Compost .....	288
Hiring Out for Weed Control .....	289
Providing “Goat Therapy” .....	289

## ***Part V: The Part of Tens* . . . . . 291**

### **Chapter 17: Ten Common Mistakes First-Time Goat Owners Make . . . . .293**

Getting Too Many Goats Too Fast.....	293
Failing to Educate Yourself before Getting Goats .....	294
Underestimating the Costs.....	294
Paying Too Much or Too Little for Your Goats .....	295
Getting Only One Goat .....	295
Buying Unhealthy Goats .....	296
Neglecting Routine Management and Care .....	296
Overlooking Your Goats’ Dietary Needs.....	297
Giving the Goats Too Little Attention .....	297
Getting a Buck before You’re Ready .....	298

### **Chapter 18: Ten Tips for Showing Your Goat . . . . .299**

Practice Walking with Your Goat before the Show .....	300
Thoroughly Clean and Groom Your Goat before the Show .....	300
Dress Appropriately.....	301

---

Keep Your Goat between You and the Judge .....	301
Keep Your Eyes on the Judge at All Times .....	301
Don't Talk with Your Neighbor .....	302
Remain Calm Even If Your Goat Is Misbehaving.....	302
Do What the Judge Asks .....	302
Keep Your Goat Properly Set Up .....	303
Be a Good Loser (or Winner) .....	303
<b>Chapter 19: Ten Misconceptions about Goats . . . . .</b>	<b>305</b>
Goats Will Eat Anything .....	305
Goats Stink.....	306
Goats Aren't Very Smart .....	306
Goats Make Good Lawn Mowers .....	306
Goat Milk Tastes Bad .....	307
Goat Meat Tastes Bad .....	307
Goats Get Most of Their Water from Plants .....	307
Goats Are Only for People Who Can't Afford Cows .....	308
Only Male Goats Have Beards.....	308
A Dog Makes a Good Friend for a Goat .....	308
 <b><i>Appendix: Goat-Milk Recipes.....</i></b>	 <b><i>311</i></b>
Cheeses and Yogurt .....	311
Drinks .....	314
Entrees and Side Dishes .....	316
Desserts .....	322
 <b><i>Index.....</i></b>	 <b><i>325</i></b>



# Introduction

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**W**elcome to *Raising Goats For Dummies*. Raising goats is a rewarding and challenging adventure. Whether you are new to it or have been raising goats for a few years, you never quit find out about or being delighted by these intelligent creatures.

I wrote this book to help you get started successfully raising goats and to answer any questions that you have. Whether you're raising goats for fun, for companionship, or to add value to your farm and your lifestyle, this book gets you on the right track.

## *About This Book*

I took ten years between thinking about getting some goats and actually getting them. I had to get a place where I could keep them and then try to figure out what I wanted and what I was getting into. After I actually became a goat owner, I had to figure out a lot through trial and error.

I needed a book that laid out the basics, gave me tips on what to look for, what to expect, and how to avoid some of the most common pitfalls. This book does that. It gives you the basic information you need to make the intelligent decisions required to successfully raise goats and helps you avoid making mistakes that have a negative effect on their lives and yours.

Even if you've been raising goats for a few years, this book can help you. You find new ideas on how to keep your goats healthy and happy. And you find out how you can use the goats you have to become more self-sufficient. This book is for anyone who wants to raise goats.

## *Conventions Used in This Book*

I use the following conventions throughout the text to make things consistent and easy to understand:

- ✓ All Web addresses appear in `monofont`.
- ✓ New terms appear in *italic* and are closely followed by an easy-to-understand definition.

- ✔ **Bold** highlights the action parts of numbered steps and key words in bullet lists.

When this book was printed, some Web addresses may have needed to break across two lines of text. If that happened, no extra characters like hyphens indicate the break. So, when using one of these Web addresses, just type in exactly what you see in this book, as though the line break doesn't exist.

## *Foolish Assumptions*

When writing this book, I made some assumptions about who you, the reader might be. I assume that you

- ✔ Are already planning to get some goats or have a few and want to find out more about caring for them
- ✔ Are interested in the basics of raising goats for milk, meat, fiber, or pets
- ✔ Want to grow some of your own food so you can control the quality and what goes into it
- ✔ Don't know much about goat health care and plan to work with a veterinarian when your goats get sick
- ✔ Want to save money by building some of structures and supplies your goats need

## *What You're Not to Read*

The beauty of *Raising Goats For Dummies* is that you don't have to read the whole book to come away with quite a bit of easily applicable information. You can skip the shaded boxes of text called sidebars, which contain stories or examples that relate to information in the chapter. Sidebars help you connect more with some of the ideas in the chapter, but they don't contain new ideas and so are skippable.

## *How This Book Is Organized*

This is a reference book, organized so that you can find what's relevant to you without starting at the beginning and reading all the way through. The upcoming sections let you know what you find where.

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## ***Part I: Getting Acquainted with Goats***

Before you run out and buy some goats, take the time to learn the basics. In this part of the book, I introduce you to goats, telling you about the many ways that goats can help you, and running through goat terminology and the goat parts you need to know. You get a sense of what makes a goat a goat — the normal behavior you can expect (which doesn't include eating cans).

You also find descriptions of the different categories and breeds of goats so that you start to figure out which goat may meet your needs. And I tell you how to get ready for goats, explaining the steps you take to make sure your goats will be safe and happy on your property.

## ***Part II: Bringing Your Goats Home***

Part II is where you discover where to find the goats you want, how to make sure they're healthy, and how to ensure that your purchase gives you what you want with a contract. I help you prepare to bring your goats home, outlining all the stuff you need to care for your goats and the steps you take to maintain them.

Goats have distinct personalities, and in this part you find out what to expect from your goats. I show you how to work with them and how to teach them a few basic and advanced skills.

## ***Part III: Glimpsing Goat Health and Breeding***

You can prevent problems in goats with a little foresight and care. This section guides you through steps you take to keep your goats healthy. I show you which records you need to keep and give you the lowdown on common testing and immunizations. I also equip you with knowledge about common goat health problems so that you know what to watch for.

Your healthy goats will have some healthy urges along the way, and this part of the book details the breeding, pregnancy, and kidding processes.

## *Part IV: Living Sustainably and Making Money from Your Goats*

Here's where you find out about working in partnership with your goats to save or make money. You find out here about milking your goats and making and selling products from the milk. You can also turn to this part to find out about caring for meat goats and to get ideas for using your goats to live sustainably or produce income.

## *Part V: The Part of Tens*

This section is packed with tips, facts, and recipes to supplement your goat knowledge. You find out about mistakes first-time goat owners tend to make and get pointers for showing your goats like a pro. I dispel ten myths about goats. I also give you my all-time favorite goat milk recipes.

## *Icons Used in the Book*

Throughout this book, little pictures in the margins draw your attention to special types of information that make your reading experience more helpful. Here's what you find:



Some information bears repeating, and I highlight it with this icon. Important points that you may turn to again and again appear next to it.



The information you find next to this icon is more detailed than usual. When you see it, feel free to move on. You won't lose out on main points.



Beside this icon are nuggets of important information that help you to be a better goatkeeper. I use this icon to show you ways to save time or money — or both.



This dangerous-looking icon draws your attention to potential bad outcomes or mistakes that you want to avoid. Pay close attention to them.



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## *Where to Go from Here*

Pick a chapter, any chapter. Each one is its own little book. You won't need to go back to fill in missing pieces from earlier chapters. Looking for information about what to expect from kidding? Turn to Chapter 13. Want to glimpse the details of caring for goats? Chapter 9 has what you need. And if you're an overachiever or just insatiably curious, by all means turn the page and keep going until you get to the back cover.

I imagine that the more you find out about goats, the more likely you are to fall in love with them. They're smart, curious, and calming, and they can even help you make some money. So welcome to the world of goats. I'm grateful for the opportunity to help you on your quest.

# 6

## Raising Goats For Dummies

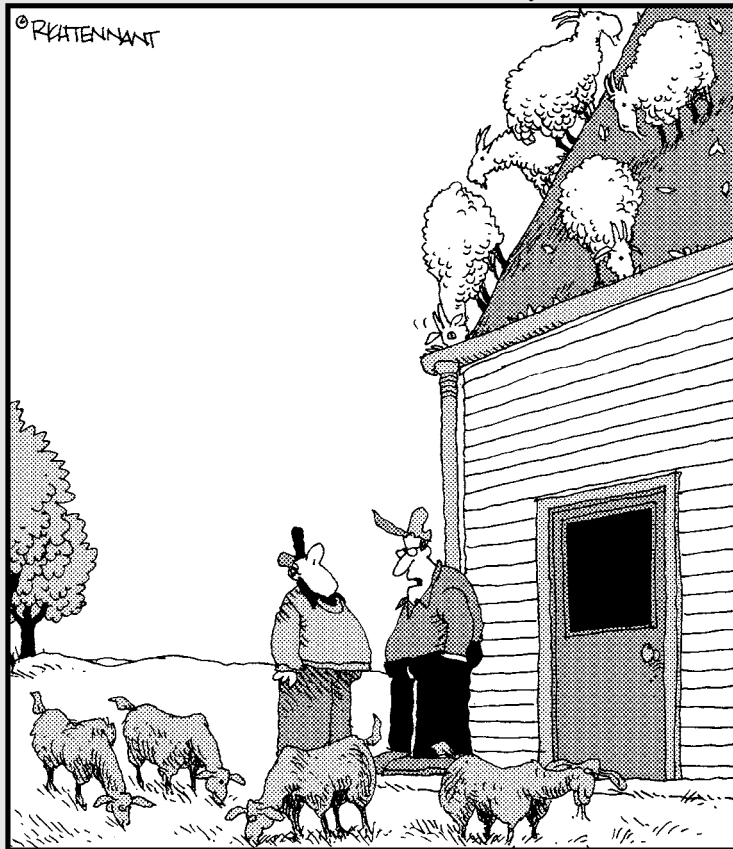
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# Part I

# Getting Acquainted with Goats

The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave

By Rich Tennant



"These guys are great for the weeds, but for the roof and gutters nothing beats the mountain goat."

## *In this part . . .*

**H**ere's where you discover the basics about the remarkable goat. See why you'd want goats and the benefits they can provide; figure out how to identify a healthy goat; run through the different breeds you might choose from; and find out how you prepare to bring them home.

## Chapter 1

# Discovering the Joys of Raising Goats

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Finding out about the many benefits of raising goats
  - ▶ Getting to know these lovable animals
  - ▶ Deciding whether goatkeeping is for you
- 

**I**'ve been raising goats since 1998, and I'm still not tired of them. In fact, I can't imagine my life without them. Talk to any other serious goatkeepers and you hear that after they get "in your blood" you have to have at least a couple.

When you get a sense of goats' many uses and get to know their unique qualities, goats will get in your blood, too. Goats are more than livestock, they're friends and helpmates, and they're entertaining as heck.

Goats have been called the poor man's cow but a better name for them would be the "green" cow. They take up less space, cost less to feed, and even contribute less to global warming because they don't emit as much methane gas. On top of all that, they're smart, friendly, and easy to manage with the proper set-up. This chapter introduces you to the benefits of raising goats and lets you know what you can expect from the experience.

## *Finding Goat Basics*

Goats are intelligent and friendly animals. They come in all sizes (but only one shape) and can help you in numerous ways. After you decide what you want to accomplish with them, you have a lot of breeds to choose from. (All goat owners have their favorite, which they can talk about endlessly.) Check out Chapter 3 for a rundown of goat breeds.

## Thank goats for coffee

According to legend, goats in the charge of an Ethiopian goatherd named Kaldi failed to return one evening. When he found them the next morning, they were excited and dancing next to a shrub covered in red berries. He investigated, trying the berries, and discovered that they were responsible for the goats' excitement. The goats had discovered coffee.

When the goatherd took the berries to the town monastery, the abbot disapproved and

threw them into the fire. When he smelled the pleasant odor they gave out as they roasted, he raked them out of the fire, ground them up, and mixed them with water. Coffee's use as a stimulant drink gradually spread around the world.

Goats still enjoy coffee, and some goat owners use it to stimulate labor and give energy to a doe that is kidding.

Goats are unique animals within the ruminant classification. *Ruminants* are also known as “cud-chewing” animals, or as having four stomachs. You can find out more about their digestive systems in Chapter 2, as well as how to tell them from sheep, what makes a healthy goat, and how goats communicate with you and each other.

Being responsible for goats is a serious undertaking. I say “goats” because goats need a herd to be happy, so you shouldn't get just one goat. You can read more about why you need at least two goats and other ways to keep them happy in Part II.

These critters can live for seven years or more, so getting goats is like getting a dog — you may be taking care of them for quite a while. Chapter 2 tells you about their life expectancy.

## *Glimpsing the Benefits of Owning Goats*

Goats are fantastic animals that have been domesticated for more than 10,000 years. You get a lot from a relatively small animal — you can milk them or eat their meat, use their fiber and their skin for making clothing, and even use their dung for fuel (if you are so inclined). In the past, goat hide was made into bags for carrying water and wine and parchment for writing on; it is still used to make drums in some countries.

You may want to raise goats for a variety of reasons. Whatever brings you to goats, you're guaranteed to find additional benefits to owning these critters after you start working with them.