

COMMODITY

GOATS

Description

Goats are raised throughout British Columbia. Highest animal concentrations occur in the south coastal and southern interior regions of the province. Herds are usually small in size with larger flocks being more common if a farm is managed as a dairy operation. It is estimated that about 80% of goats are raised for the purposes of milk production.

Goats are produced for their milk and for the freezer meat market. Farms specializing in milk production normally sell some of their kids at an age of about one week to be raised and fed on separate farms⁷ involved in fattening for the meat market.

Several breeds of goats are used for meat and 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 goats can be raised for both purposes.

Goats are generally bred in the fall and kid in the spring, but some are capable of breeding throughout the year. Bucks emit an unpleasant odour, especially during the breeding season which can last from August through January. Age at first breeding is in the range of nine to fourteen months. The gestation period covers a period of 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 in totally enclosed buildings on some farms during winter, while on others they are confined and fed under shelters.

Goats are more inquisitive than sheep, and by nature are browsers more than they are grazers. Confining goats within fences for pasturing is therefore usually a greater challenge than it is with sheep.

See also Commodity: Dairy

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 the following.

Animal Care and Handling

At present there is no specific recommended code of practice for the care and handling of goats. Goats are considered small ruminants as are sheep, and the raising of the two species is similar. Some of the

recommended animal husbandry practices for sheep may therefore be applicable to goats. These are outlined in the publication entitled *Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep*.

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

Grazing

Goats may be pastured throughout the growing season. It is not unusual in certain parts of the province to allow them access to pasture and range land 24 hours a day.

See also Farm Practice: [Forage](#)

Manure is collected and stored or composted until it can be applied to cropland as a fertilizer. Some odours will be generated as a result of waste handling, agitation and land spreading.

See also Farm Practice: [Composting](#)
[Farmstead Refuse](#)
[Fertilizers and Soil Conditioners](#)
[Manure Storage and Use](#)
[Mortality Disposal](#)

Principal and Accessory Buildings

From an operational perspective, principal farm buildings on goat dairies are typically milking facilities, cold storage areas, livestock housing barns, holding pens, and feeding areas. Accessory farm buildings may include storages for agricultural wastes, chemicals, cooled or frozen products, compost input materials, compost products, hay, grain, and wood waste. Other accessory structures can include confined livestock areas, shelters, machine sheds, on-farm composting buildings, processing facilities, or direct farm marketing buildings. From a watercourse protection perspective, however, the definition of principal and accessory buildings may differ. For the purposes of determining applicable setbacks from watercourses and property lines, therefore, local government bylaws or the *Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas* should be consulted. Building assessments may need to be conducted on a case-by-case basis if the designation of a building as principal or accessory is unclear.

Legislation

Agricultural producers are expected to follow all legislation that pertains to their farming operations. The *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* stipulates that the farm operation must meet the *Public Health Act*, *Integrated Pest Management Act*, *Environmental 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 and which may be of special interest to game farm producers include the following.

Federal Legislation

The *Canadian Agricultural Products Act* and its regulations (*Dairy Products Regulations*) deal with health and safety standards for dairy products, standards for international and interprovincial trade of dairy products, and the administration of analysis, inspection and grading services.

The *Fisheries Act* prohibits the discharge of deleterious substances such as fertilizers, manure and pesticides into watercourses.

The *Health of Animals Act* covers diseases that may affect animals or be transmitted to humans.

Provincial Legislation

The *Food Products Standards Act* allows establishment of standards for processed foods.

The *Meat Inspection Act* regulates animal slaughter and the sale of meat and meat by-products.

The *Milk Industry Act* and its regulations (*Milk Industry Standards Regulation*) govern production, inspections, storage, transportation, processing and sale of milk and milk byproducts. The Act requires that all milk, with the exception of raw milk used in the production of certain specialty cheeses, is pasteurized.

The *Motor Vehicle Act* regulates animal movement on public roads.

The *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act* protects all animals (other than wild animals not in captivity) from distress during handling or any activities not considered to fall under generally-accepted animal management practices.

Local Government Legislation

Applicable local government legislation may include animal control bylaws and meat inspection bylaws.

Publications

Publications that provide information on goat farming include, but are not limited to, the following. Refer to Appendix D for details.

British Columbia Agricultural Composting Handbook

British Columbia Environmental Farm Plan Reference Guide

British Columbia Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Guide

Large Animal Disposal – On-Farm Composting Option, South Coastal Region of BC

Large Animal Disposal – On-Farm Burial Option, South Coastal Region of BC

On-Farm Food Safety

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