



Sheep and Goats in Your Pasture



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A great choice!

- Small ruminants are well-suited for our area and climate.
- Both are growing markets
- Relatively easy to raise/maintain

Challenges

- Parasites require constant watch
- Susceptible to predators
- Birthing requires careful attention
- Maximizing market potential



Fencing

Two real choices: Woven wire or High-tensile for perimeter fences.

Goats and sheep will test the fence, but the real threat is predator entry.

Any fence: 7kV is needed to deter predators and crazy goats. Consider hot wire on top of Woven wire

Small Ruminant Electric Fence Guidelines

For Goats and Sheep, 4 or 5 strand fencing is recommended. The bottom wire should be about 6-8 inches off the ground and spacing should be between 6 and 10 inches above.



Barns and Pens- Needed for Issues

A barn with stalls can be very beneficial for tending to sick animals or birthing difficulties. It does not need to be elaborate, but needs to house supplies, some feed, and water



Exterior pens are beneficial for keeping small groups, quarantining new arrivals, added protection from predation, and easier loading.



Pastures- Sheep

Pasture care is essential to healthy sheep and efficient grazing they need:

- Cool season grasses- fescue, orchard grass
- Legumes- clovers, lespedeza
- Warm season annuals?

Plan for reseeding regularly, rotate to maximize time off grazing, consider stockpiling for winter grazing

Pasture management is the most economical investment for feeding!

Pastures- Goats

Goats are a little more forgiving with forages, having a preference for woody plant leaves. Excellent scrub tree cleaners!

Goats are a perfect tool for improving land through managed grazing. Recently timbered land can be effectively cleared for renovation using goats. The greatest challenge is temporary areas or rough terrain.

For established areas, follow sheep pasture recommendations as they are ideal.



Pasture Management

Pro-active

Annual weed surprise- be prepared for bushhogging, spot spraying, area spraying, physical removal.

Annual weather surprise- protect roots, maintain soil health, stay ahead of soil amendments



Reactive

Annual weed surprise- as farmers we must react!

ID weeds that aren't being consumed, find control options, find what you can do

Annual weather surprise- temporarily fence out damaged/eroded areas, repair/amend soil to fix the issue

Supplemental Nutrition

Feed:

Be proactive on having a supply of both high and lower quality hay

Consider preparing for round hay use (cost saver!)

Make use of supplemental feeds such as grains or pelleted feeds. Keyword: supplemental!

Minerals:

Use “complete” minerals. Salt or trace mineral blocks are generally not sufficient.

Experiment with varieties: look for consumption rate, physical changes, body condition



Breed Selection

1. Select for need: Meat, Dairy, Dual-purpose, Wool
2. Select for hardiness- does it do well here? Use your neighbors!
3. Once established with hardy breeds, feel free to experiment with others.
4. Cross-breeding to meet needs? - Be careful, you're playing with money and herd health!



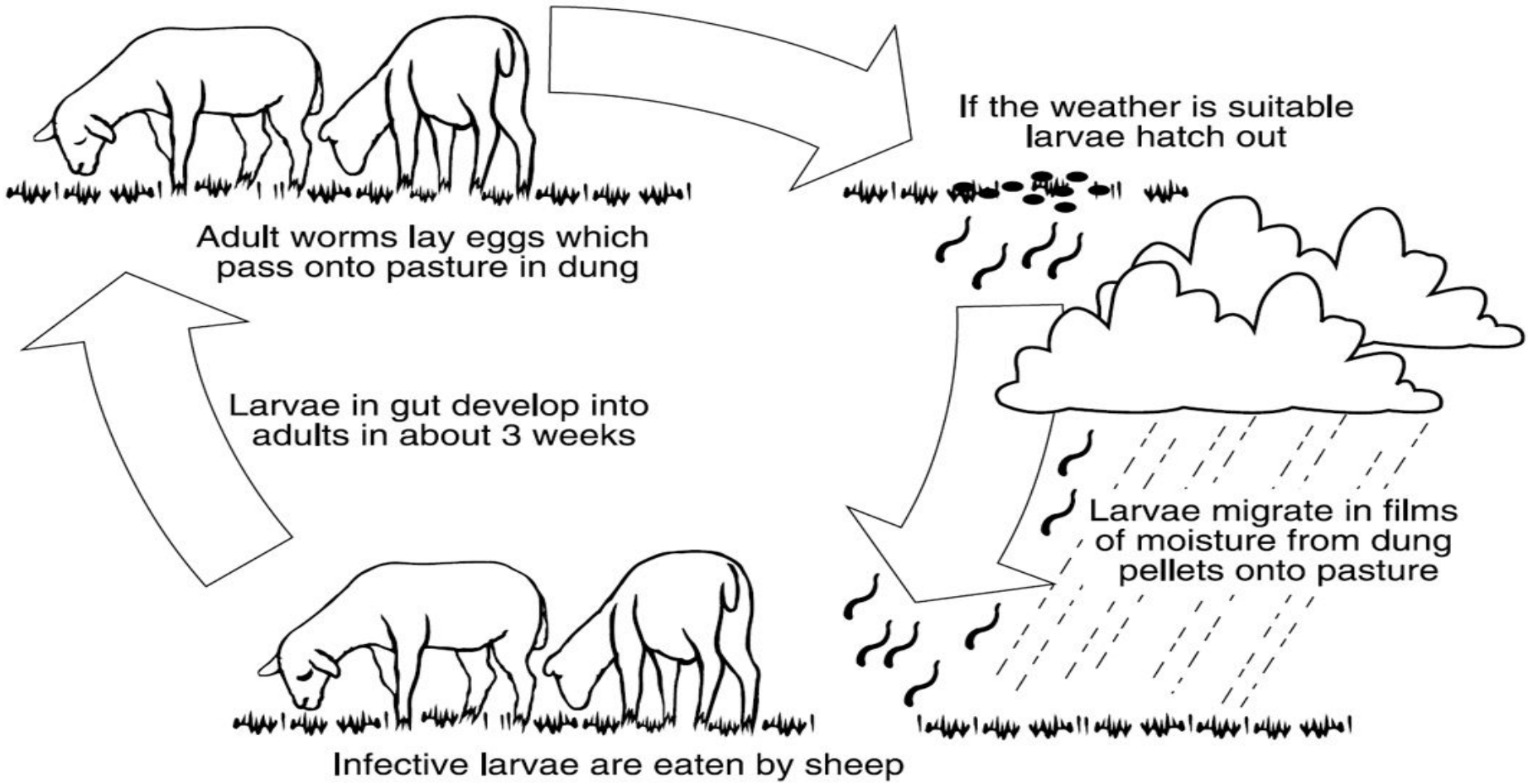
Parasites- the Barber's Pole Worm

An intestinal roundworm that causes haemonchosis- a condition of anemia, digestive issues, and emaciation.

The roundworm latches on to the intestinal walls and sucks blood. This simultaneously interrupts digestion and lowers blood supply and red-blood cell count.

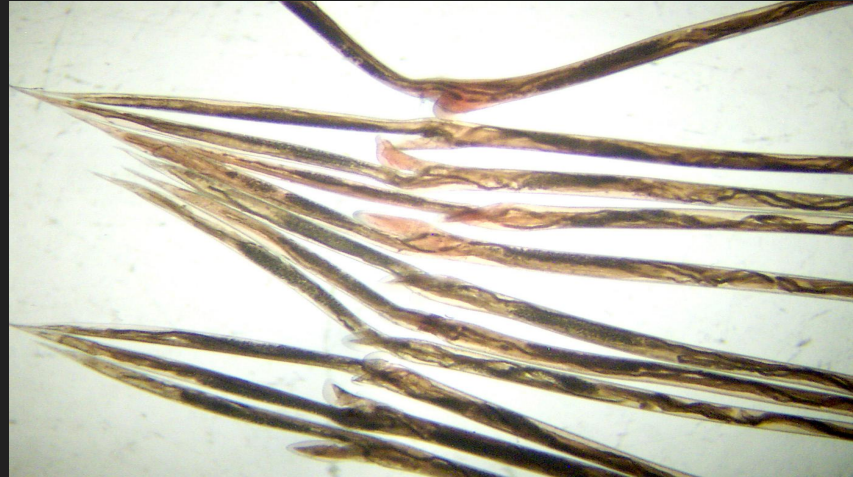
The leading cause of death in goats in this area.

Life cycle of sheep worms



Control

1. Use FAMACHA for detection
2. Deworming agents- Ivermectin and similar compounds, Fenbendazole, and a few prescription options
3. If possible, quarantine infected until FAMACHA score improves
4. Increase grazing rotation intervals so that the larvae are allowed to die off (21 days +/- given weather conditions)



Prevention

- Lespedeza can help limit levels of infestation
- Keep average grazing above 6 inches
- Quarantine new and infected animals- clean pasture and herds rarely see infections



Breeding, birthing, castrating

Sheep and Goats- seasonal breeders, use breeding calendars specific for female breed

Body condition score of 5-6 for open females

Birthing- watch without interfering unless labor has continued for more than an hour or exhaustion has set in.

Castrate 2-21 days, various approved methods



Market Options

Traditional market- stockyard sales- can be a profitable method, easiest method

Online sales- Craigslist, various Facebook sales sites, and sales pages can increase yield but with increased risk

Product sales- meat, dairy, wool- find and exploit markets

In any market- be an advocate for the final product! Leaner, healthier options, higher quality products (wool)

References

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<https://meatgoats.ces.ncsu.edu/>

<http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-1316/ANR-1316.pdf>

<https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/monitoring-the-body-condition-of-meat-goats-a-key-to-successful-management>