

Goats Require Minimal Investment But Several Factors Can Impact Profits

NEOSHO, MO.

There are several major benefits to raising meat goats according to Dr. Jodie Pennington, a small ruminant specialist working with Lincoln University and University of Missouri Extension,

“Raising goats requires minimal costs for facilities and investment. They are also attractive for their ability to use grass and other low cost forages, brush control, high pregnancy rates, and potential for high returns per acre,” said Pennington. “But at the same time, goats also have the potential for losses if sound management is not maintained.”

Sound management of any goat enterprise depends on good records to monitor economic factors and the proper care of the animals.

Pennington says it is essential that animal identification be made in a precise manner. Budgets should be set to determine the financial feasibility of the business. Breeders should also make sure they have a market for their goats

before they begin.

A calendar is also recommended to make sure routine management practices which are conducted in a timely manner and treatment procedures for illnesses are established.

“Proper care of meat goats is essential because the best economic returns are realized when disease problems are minimal,” said Pennington. “That means cleanliness and proper animal comfort are important for the prevention of disease.”

Major problems with raising goats include marketing, internal parasite control, an economic and sustainable forage program, availability of good breeding stock, predator control (primarily guard dogs), availability of a local veterinarian, and lack of model farms to emulate.

“Some producers with full-time jobs may be limited in the time that they can spend on goats at critical times. Feeding the guard dog can also be a problem with absentee owners, but it is essential the goats be protected from

predators,” said Pennington.

More and more cattle producers are running goats with the cattle, either in leader-follower system or concurrently. The advantage of this system is that the pasture is used more efficiently.

The goats are browsers and eat the bushy plants, including many weeds, and the cattle eat the lower-growing grass. According to Pennington, forage use can be improved 10 to 20 percent by this system which also works well with horses.

“The performance of your meat goats is a combination of several factors. The breeding and selection of the animals, the health and care of the animals once they are in your possession, and the interaction with facilities, feeding, and weather will all effect performance,” said Pennington.

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