

Meat goat tips

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Meat goat production is becoming more and more popular in Bartow County.

Meat goat production is an industry where a person does not have to own as many acres as compared to larger agriculture animals. We have several local auction facilities where a person can purchase and market their goat as well.

Also, the Southern Highlands Meat Goat Association is based in Bartow County. This multi-county organization is where folks involved in meat goat production can meet and discuss important industry topics.

Finally, showing meat goats is becoming more popular around the state for youth.

Today, I will like to share information on facilities needed and general nutrition facts in meat goat production. The information will come from retired UGA Animal Scientist, Calvin Alford and James Strickland, UGA Veterinarian.

First, proper facilities are a must because there are going to be times when you have to deworm, vaccinate, tag and many other animal husbandry activities of your goat herd. Goats are agile and can be almost impossible to handle if you do not have proper facilities. Pens first need to be sturdy and need to be at least four feet high.

If you want to design a working chute, it needs to be

curved and approximately 10 feet in length, four feet high and 12 inches wide. Sliding gates are also a great addition to a working chute because it will divide the chute into sections.

If you raise goats, you will need goat shelter from bad weather. Providing a dry shed that opens to the south will give good weather protection. The shelter should be closed on two or three sides and give five square feet of floor space per goat. A lower roof will also help trap body heat for those cold weather.

Fencing is a must. The most common goat fencing is a combination of woven wire and barbed wire. Woven wire is more commonly called "hog wire". The woven wire needs to be 47 inches in high and then you would put one to two strands of barbed wire above the woven wire and even a strand of barbed wire about ground level. Goats like to climb, so you may have to eventually do some fence repair.

Meat goats are considered minimal care animals by many because they are browsers. This means they spread their grazing pressure over a larger area as compared to other livestock animals. They will forage on vegetation that other animals will not. Goats will forage on blackberries, honeysuckle, thistles and kudzu. According to Alford and Strickland, it is a myth that goats can make use of poor quality and trash feeds.

Goats appear to need more quality than larger livestock animals. Goats are different in the fact that they are more selective in their browser mentality and are able to select the more nutritional parts of plants available.

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