

FEB, 2008

PASA SMALL RUMINANT WORKSHOP

MANAGING GOATS

For Prescribed Grazing



GOAT MANAGEMENT SEEDS
IDEAS FOR PRESCRIBED GRAZING

P R E S E N T E R
KATHY VOTH

In This Presentation

Choosing and Working With the Right Goat

What Do Goats Eat?

Fencing Whys and Hows

The Business End of a Goat

Further Reading & Resources

www.livestockforlandscapes.com
Training DVDs, on-line courses, CDs workshops, and color copies of this handout.

www.behave.net
More information and research on animal behavior

Toxic Plants of North America,
George Burrows and Ronald J. Tyrl

A Guide to Plant Poisoning of Animals in North America, Anthony P. Knight, Richard G. Walter

Contact Kathy by email at:
kvoth@livestockforlandscapes.com

Start small to grow big with these helpful and tested techniques for managing goats for prescribed grazing.

YOUR PRESENTER

Kathy Voth began working with goats in 1997 on a pilot project to use goats to reduce fire danger at Utah's Camp Williams National Guard Training Facility. She explored ways to manage goats to build fire breaks and control weeds. Her research was funded by the federal Joint Fire Science Program and resulted in a Handbook on CD to help both grazing providers and land managers use the best techniques for managing goats as a tool.

Today Kathy runs Livestock for Landscapes, LLC helping producers and land managers use natural behaviors to turn livestock into an

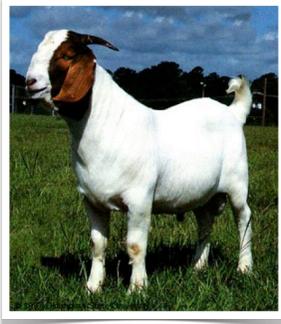
economical and environmentally friendly tool for:

- Sustainable agriculture and local food production
- Managing or reducing weeds and fire danger; and
- Creating or improving wildlife habitat.

Most recently she developed a 5 day process for teaching cows to eat weeds including Canada thistle, leafy spurge, spotted and diffuse knapweed.

You can learn more at her web site:
www.livestockforlandscapes.com

Choosing the Right Goat



Breed

What works best for you?



Most Important Attributes

Good teeth, feet and health



Herd Health Management

C.L.

C.L.A.

Johne's

<http://www.johnes.org>



<http://www.johnes.org>



Horns vs. De-Horned

What results do you want?



Hair and Beards



Size and Age



Experience

Remember they're colleagues, not livestock

Cows, goats and sheep are colleagues in a work environment where we are all cordial and polite. Like my human colleagues, they have different skills and abilities and some understand what I'm saying better than others. So that I can be understood, I create expectations by using the same processes and procedures time after time. When they know what to expect, they do their jobs better.

Adhere to a "No violence in the workplace" policy.

Since my animals are all bigger and stronger than me, I've found a "No violence in the workplace" policy is safest for all of us. Over time, shoving and manhandling leads to animals who are flight and distrustful around people. The simplest task requires chasing and more muscle, and thus increases the potential of injury to me first and the animal second. Whenever my frustrations invite anger or urge violence I try to remember that I have a brain and thumbs so I can create tools or processes that will make this all a little easier.

Animals may be violent with each other. It is their nature to communicate with head butts. However it is NEVER acceptable for them to communicate with me this way. With cows I demonstrate that I am bigger than them by presenting myself full on, sometimes with arms raised. I also watch their body language and avoid situations where I might have to prove myself. To help goats with non-violence, I rarely touch their horns or use them as "handles" because, as an old herder explained, "Touching the horns on a goat is like grabbing a football player's face mask."

Create and maintain a relationship of trust.

I try to establish trust with my animals at an early age. This is most easily done with a combination of quiet, consistent behavior and some snacks. Animals who know that this is what they'll get from me load and trail more easily, come when called, and return when lost. Having this relationship with at least some of the members of the herd makes it easier to work with less "tame" animals.



My "Ah Ha!" moment about working with goats

happened when I looked after a retired seeing-eye dog one weekend. To take care of Bette I needed training. I learned how to ask Bette to get in the truck and to come up to bed. But most amazing, I learned how to ask Bette to go to the bathroom.

"Before you go to bed at night, take Bette out. Tell her 'Do your business.' She will go the bathroom and come right back."

The first time I did this, Bette went into the yard, squatted and then returned. I was amazed! No sniffing around, no running across the lawn, no cavorting along the way.

Bette had been raised by people who had expectations of her not as a dog, but as a dog with a job to do. That realization changed the way I work with my animals. I decided to have expectations of them as workers, not as "livestock." But simply having expectations is not enough. I must communicate my expectations. Here's how I do that.

Familiarize them with their new work environments and orient them to their task.

When working with goats in a prescribed grazing situation, I walk my colleagues around the perimeters, show them where the water is and then lead them into the pasture to show them where they can start working. Because of our trusting relationship, this reduces their stress, prevents them from bunching up at the gate hoping to go back to where they came from, and ensures that they begin working productively right away. It's really no different than showing a new employee where his office is, where the break room is, and where the bathrooms are.

Think like a cow, goat or sheep.

Whenever I have a problem with my herd doing something I don't want them to do, or not doing something I want them to do, the solution comes more easily if I ask myself, "If I were a ____, what would I do?" This has helped me build better fences, find easier ways to load and unload animals, and to solve escape issues.

If you fail to plan, plan to fail.

Believe it or not, I sometimes show up ready to load or move animals with no real plan for the process. I forget that they may not understand my words or my body language. The result is that the project takes twice as long as it would have if I'd arrived with a clue.

Any time I find myself frustrated or the animals communicate their own frustration by running or scattering, I take time to develop a plan. (Remember that part about having a brain and thumbs!) A good plan should incorporate communication techniques that animals understand. Appropriately placed fence panels direct them into the trailer much more effectively than my waving arms, and they understand my requests much better when they're accompanied by a bucket of grain. Using the same communication methods and plans over time is a key to success.

This works for me, but everyone has his or her own style. I'd love to hear your secrets to success. Feel free to drop me a line at:

kvoth@livestockforlandscapes.com.

What Do Goats Eat?

Mother/ Culture



Animals learn what to eat.

They learn from mother and peers

Includes videos of animals demonstrating behavior principles

Internal Feedback



They learn from internal feedback.

Need for Change



And they only change if they have to.

Fencing Whys and Hows



Fences:

Focus goats on tasks
More reliable than herders
Some protection from predators
Protect community from goats
Save marriages.



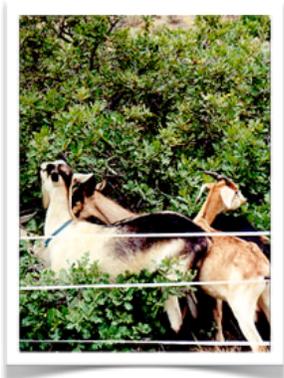
Types of Fencing

Polytape
Polywire
Goat netting

Keys to Fencing Success

- **Build your fence correctly using good materials and an awareness of wildlife, the local community and goat behavior.**
- **Do simple daily maintenance to keep the Fence in Good running order**
- **Maintain respect for the fence by keeping a strong charge and not asking goats to cross over it when moving to a new pen.**
- **Make Sure Your goats have everything they need inside the fence so they won't want to leave.**

Fencing Whys and Hows Continued



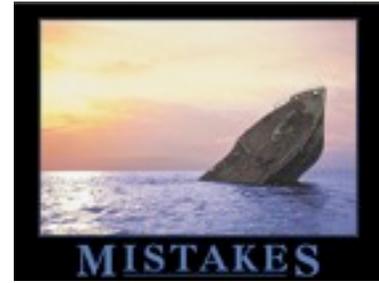
Pen Size Considerations

- Forage available
- Number of animals and their condition
- How often you want to move fence
- Strength of your fence
- Goals of the grazing program



Escape Mitigation

- No bucks
- A few animals who come when called
- A fallback enclosure for unexpected events



Fencing Mistakes

- Poor fencing location
- Poor animal choice
- Failure to cull
- Inadequate ground rods

The Business End of a Goat



Good business planning starts with a clear goal



First say to yourself what you would be; and then do what you have to do. - - Epictetus

Holistic Goal Planning (from "Small-Scale Livestock Farming by Carol Ekarius)

- Quality of Life - What is it you want? What do you want for your family and your community? This goal is about happiness, health, wisdom, aesthetics and culture.
- Forms of Production - Livestock? Crops? What do the profits cover? "Unrealistic expectations have sunk many farmers."
- Future Resources - If you could look at your community or farm 100 years from now, what would you want to see? This can include the land and the people who live there.
- Involve all the decision makers in your goal setting. Discuss more than money and profits.

Suggestions for Getting Started



Pilot Projects

People are more comfortable trying unfamiliar things on a smaller scale.



Start small to grow big

There is such a thing as too many goats, especially if they can't work year round



When you're small

Transportation is easier
Reduces risks from "learning opportunities"
Train wrecks are smaller and easier to mend



Finding Customers

City/County/State Fire/Weed Managers
Federal Agencies
Utility Companies
Home Owners Associations
Town Councils
NRCS



Working with People

Create expectations
Show video and photos
Listen closely to what they want



Prevent surprises

Be open about potential problems.
Sometimes folks have really good solutions.
And when they're not surprised, folks are generally happier.



Have a good contract

There is such a thing as too many goats, especially if they can't work year round



Contract Goals

Describe what the area should look like when you're done.
Stubble height, growth form remaining, reduction in forage, etc.



Mitigation for potential problems

Weed control
Goat escapes
Responsibility for damage goes to...?

