



GOAT WELFARE

Humane treatment of animals is becoming one of the major concerns of public as goat products (meat, milk, cheese, soaps and hides etc) are increasing on the shelves of supermarkets as well as in the restaurants. Keeping in view the increasing demand of goat products, producers may have to answer more and more questions regarding the welfare of the goats. It is important to understand the basic needs of the goats so they can thrive well in their own environment.

General and basic needs:

Manitoba Animal Care Act outlines the duties for livestock owners including goat producers. The main duties under the act include

- Provision of adequate water and feed
- Provision of adequate medical attention
- Protection from heat and cold
- Provision of adequate space, ventilation and sanitation
- Opportunity for exercise

Web link for Manitoba Animal Care Act

<http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/1996/c06996e.php>

“Producers and staff must acknowledge and act on their responsibility of euthanizing critically injured or significantly debilitated animals in timely manner. In some cases, humane euthanasia is the veterinary treatment of choice in livestock production systems”, says Dr Terry Whiting, Manager—Animal Health & Welfare, Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives.

On-Farm Euthanasia

A decision making process comes handy in situations where goats have to be killed due to disease, injury and/or some other cause. It is extremely important to euthanize goats humanely.

Critical points to make right decision at right time:

- Decide when to stop treating an animal (in the hope of recovery) if it is not responding (e.g., 14 days)
- Decide upon a point past which, if an animal is not meeting target requirements (e.g., weight), it is to be culled
- Downers should automatically be killed on farm

Methods of Euthanasia

Following few methods can be used to perform on-farm euthanasia. Always consider animal welfare, human safety, cost and skills before choosing any method.

- Intravenous administration of barbiturates by a veterinarian (preferred method)
- Penetrating captive bullet
- Gunshot





Herd Management

Ignorance is no excuse for inflicting hardship or abuse on animals that could be due to any reason (e.g., financial cost, family instability). Deprivation of basic needs to the goats subject to cruelty or abuse should be reported to authorities (Phone # 1-204-945-8000) by the observers.

Separation of kids by sex is recommended by 3 months of age due to their ability to breed by then. Kids should be weaned at least 2.5 X their birth weight. Milk fed kids should be fed at least twice a day. Creep feeding is necessary for rumen development as well as for normal growth of the kids

The prevention of horn growth in certain breeds is advisable to keep the injury levels low in a herd. Disbudding between day 3 and 10 is considered the least possible distress to the kids. Return the kids to their normal environment as soon as possible. When using hot iron for disbudding do not overheat the kid's head.

To prevent unwanted breeding by male goats, castration is performed as early as management procedures will allow. Adequate restraint and cleanliness is must for performing both disbudding and castration. If an infection is suspected afterwards antibiotic therapy (veterinary prescript) should be provided. Use of fly repellent on the wound is an important consideration in summer.

Very aggressive or timid animals should be separated from rest of the herd. Space allowance should be calculated according to the guidelines mentioned in Code of Practice for Goats (available upon request or through National Farm Animal Care Council website <http://nfacc.ca/pdf/english/Goats2004.pdf>).

Public Health regulations in Manitoba require veterinary anti and post mortem inspection of goat meat entering commercial trade. No producer should knowingly sell or giveaway a goat for meat if they suspect the purchaser plans to sell meat in contravention of public health regulations. Producers should make sure the purchasers have means to transport the goats humanely.

Dairy goats require special care due to their high production needs. It is necessary to keep in mind the udders vulnerability to injury and/or exposure to diseases. High nutritional demands for lactation should never be ignored. Avoid over milking to maintain udder health. Comfort of the goats should be the first consideration while designing a milking parlour.

Transportation

Distress during handling and transport of goats should be minimized. Do not grab or move goats by their fleece, hair, ears, horns, and tail. Goats should have an access to fresh water and feed during rest periods on a long haul. Restraining and handling facilities should be free of sharp edges and objects. Electric pods are not recommended for directing goats. Nannies in lactation require special care to assure comfort, and avoid udder injury and mastitis subsequent to transport.

Drivers are responsible for the welfare of goats during transport. Transporters must comply with federal Health of Animals Regulations, Part XII (<http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/H-3.3/C.R.C.-c.296/132005.html>). Discomfort to the goats through overcrowding, overheating, and cold exposure must be avoided. Any circumstance that has a potential of injury must also be avoided.

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