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Animal Welfare Guidelines – Goats

Approved under Section 44B of the *Animal Welfare Act 1993* by the then Minister for Primary Industries and Water – October 2008.
Replaces Animal Welfare Standard No 4 – The Goat.

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ANIMAL WELFARE GUIDELINES

Animal welfare considerations are becoming increasingly important in the keeping and farming of animals, both in Australia and internationally. Practices which may have once been deemed acceptable or justifiable, are now being reassessed in the light of new knowledge and changing attitudes. High standards of welfare are not only important legally and ethically, but also have direct economic benefits and are becoming increasingly necessary for continued market access.

Tasmania's Animal Welfare Guidelines are approved by the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, after consultation with the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, in accordance with section 44B of the *Animal Welfare Act 1993*.

Under the Animal Welfare Act, Animal Welfare Guidelines are to include guidelines for the education and guidance of persons involved in the care and management of animals. Animal Welfare Guidelines are therefore advisory in nature. They are intended to help people involved in the care and management of animals adopt high standards of husbandry. In addition, they may be used by the Courts as a yardstick to assess husbandry and management.

The Animal Welfare Guidelines may be based on the *Australian Model Codes of Practice for the Welfare of Animals*, or the *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines*, endorsed by the Primary Industries Ministerial Council (PIMC). Alternatively, where there is no suitable national model, Animal Welfare Guidelines may be developed in Tasmania, in consultation with industry and animal welfare groups.

Animal Welfare Guidelines will be revised to take into account changes in animal management practices and in knowledge of animal welfare.

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1. SCOPE AND INTENTION OF THESE GUIDELINES

These Guidelines set out the minimum requirements for the welfare of goats, including goats kept commercially for fibre or milk, and goats kept non-commercially or as companion animals. They are intended as a guide for all people responsible for the welfare and husbandry of goats.

Goats are kept in situations which vary from extensive grazing to close confinement and housing. Whatever the form of husbandry, owners and managers of goats have a responsibility to care for the welfare of the animals under their control.

The basic behavioural, anatomical and physiological needs of goats are considered in this document, irrespective of the degree of intensive husbandry practised.

The importance of competent stockmanship in animal welfare cannot be over-emphasised. The important skill of a competent herdsman is the ability to recognise the early signs of distress or disease in goats so that the cause can be identified, and prompt, appropriate, remedial action taken.

The basic requirements for the welfare of goats are:

- Food and water to sustain health and vitality.
- Sufficient space to provide freedom to stand, lie down, stretch and groom themselves.
- Protection from predation.
- Protection from disease, including disease that can be exacerbated by management.
- Protection from extremes of climate during certain phases of their life.
- Protection from unnecessary, unreasonable and unjustifiable pain, suffering and injury.

2. DUTY OF CARE

Under the Animal Welfare Act, persons who have the care or charge of animals have a legal “duty of care” for the welfare of those animals, and must take all reasonable measures to ensure their welfare.

In the case of goats, persons with this legal duty of care include the owner, the person with control or custody, the operator or manager of the premises where the goats are kept and the manager or director of a body corporate which owns them.

Where goats are under agistment, the legal duty of care rests with the owner or manager of the land on which the goats are agisted, unless there is a written agreement otherwise.

People providing agistment are advised to formally establish their responsibilities by legal agreement.

3. FOOD

Under the Animal Welfare Act it is an offence to fail to provide animals in your care with appropriate and sufficient food.

Goats should be provided with food that will maintain their health and vitality.

Goats are selective feeders and will not thrive or produce on poor quality feed only. Goats, when kept in shrubby environments, will browse more than sheep, but in these environments grazing still forms the major proportion of their diet. The carrying capacity of scrub is often very low. Goats can be kept on pasture provided grazing pressure is suitable.

Food provided for goats should meet the requirements of maintenance, growth, pregnancy, lactation and fibre production, and provide for any extra demands placed on goats such as exercise or cold stress.

Nutritional factors essential for growth, health and vitality should not be deliberately withheld from goats.

Goats should be protected as far as possible from foods deleterious to their health.

4. WATER

Under the Animal Welfare Act it is an offence to fail to provide animals in your care with appropriate and sufficient water.

Water should be readily accessible to goats.

When moisture available on pasture is not sufficient to sustain goats a water supply should be provided.

The level of water intake depends upon dry matter content of feed eaten, production level, especially of lactating goats, rainfall and body weight of goats. A goat in full lactation may consume up to 10 litres of water per day; this intake may double if the temperature exceeds 40°C.

Water provided for goats should not cause ill-health.

Water quality (salinity, taste, temperature) can adversely affect intake. Goats have adapted to high salt levels (>5000 mg/L) but generally prefer saline levels less than 2000 mg/L.

5. DROUGHT

Drought may be defined as a severe rainfall shortage which leads to deficiency in feed supply for grazing goats. Drought is not the normal seasonal shortage of feed.

Goats being fed for survival should be examined at feeding times. Less thrifty goats may require segregation for special treatment.

Where provisions for health and vitality cannot be met, goats should be moved, agisted, sold or slaughtered on site.

Drought-affected goats which are unable to rise and walk should be destroyed humanely on site. Carcasses should be burnt, buried or sent to an appropriate rendering works or knackery.

Drought-affected goats which go down after limited exercise are at their minimum survival weight. They must be fed and watered to maintain or improve condition. They are NOT fit to travel.

Drought-affected goats still able to walk but in an emaciated condition, and for which supplementary feed or agistment is not available, should be sent directly to a knackery, rendering works or abattoir, as close as possible to their on-farm location. They should not be consigned to saleyards.

Drought-affected goats should be protected against exposure to extremes of temperature and weather. Road vehicles transporting drought-affected goats and operating during cold, wet weather should have at least the front of the stock crate enclosed.

6. PROTECTION FROM CLIMATIC EXTREMES AND PREDATION

Under the Animal Welfare Act it is an offence to fail to provide animals in your care with appropriate and sufficient shelter.

Goats are sensitive to cold and heat stress and all reasonable steps should be taken to minimise the effects of climatic extremes and other factors that produce either cold stress or heat stress in goats.

Goats are vulnerable to cold stress, especially off shears or in low body condition, and require the

provision of permanent shelter or good natural shelter.

Steps should be taken to ensure that, as far as practicable, goats can be attended to promptly in the event of fire, flood, injury or disease.

Reasonable means should be used to protect goats from predation.

7. INTENSIVE GOAT SYSTEMS - HOUSING AND ACCOMMODATION

Definitions

Feedlot: an operation where goats are confined and hand-fed on an area for 12 to 24 hours per day for an extended period of time.

Open feedlot: a feedlot where goats have access to a loafing area which has a soil base and is exposed to the environment.

Housed feedlot: a feedlot where goats are restricted in area and generally enclosed and protected from the elements.

Feed pad: an operation where goats are hand-fed with supplements on a confined area for up to 12 hours per day.

Feedlots and feed pads should accommodate space requirements of goats.

The design, location and construction of a feedlot and/or a feed pad should take account of topography, climate, age and size of animal, space and feed requirements, and labour and management skills available.

Tethered and confined goats should have enough space to be able to lie down, stretch, stand up and to exercise. They should have access to shelter, food and water.

Tethering

Tethering is not recommended unless there is constant supervision of the goats.

Sheds or arks (mobile sheds) provided for tethered goats should be of sufficient size to allow the animal to stand up, turn around and lie down.

Goats should not be permanently tethered by lengths less than 4 body lengths, unless selective veterinary therapy under shorter tether is prescribed, or for show, display or approved experimentation purposes. Goats should not be hobbled unless under veterinary supervision.

Collars, ropes, chains and similar materials used for tethering of goats should be constructed and used so as to avoid injury and pain.

Housing

In the case of housed goats, ventilation, whether mechanical or natural, should assist in the removal of environment heat, moisture, carbon dioxide, dust, noxious gases and airborne infectious organisms, and replace these with fresh air. This air should be distributed in a manner appropriate to the location of the stock and the design of the building.

8. GOAT HANDLING FACILITIES

Sheds, pens, yards, lanes, loading ramps, dips and areas where goats are forced to congregate, should be constructed and maintained so as to minimise the risk of injury and disease.

Floors of yards, sheds, pens and loading ramps, should have a surface that is not slippery and facilitates regular cleaning.

Holding yards should be large enough to accommodate goats comfortably and not predispose goats to injury.

Uneven or steeply sloping surfaces greatly increase the risk of falling because goats often display defensive reflexes when confronted with such situations and make sudden unco-ordinated movements.

Goats should spend as little time as management practices allow confined in yards to minimise chances of injury. Handling of goats, particularly kids and heavily pregnant does, in small groups will minimise injury in yards.

Facilities should be available to permit adequate restraint of goats which require inspection or treatment because of illness or injury.

Goats should be caught and restrained by holding the horn at its base with the skull. Goats should not be restrained by the end of the horn, as leverage can cause horns to break at or on the skull.

9. MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

9.1 General

Practices that cause pain should not be carried out on goats if painless and practical methods of husbandry can be adopted to achieve the same result.

Any injury, illness or distress observed should be promptly treated.

Management procedures carried out on goats should be competently performed.

Restraint used on goats should be the minimum necessary to perform procedures efficiently.

Hygienic precautions should be undertaken for all operations.

9.2 Supervision

Frequency and level of inspection should be related to the likelihood of welfare problems of goats.

Goats kept under intensive management in sheds, feedlots or yards should be inspected, fed and watered daily.

Goats grazing under more extensive conditions require variable supervision, according to density of stocking, availability of suitable feed, reliability of water supply, age and pregnancy status, climatic conditions and management practices.

Absentee owners of freehold land have a responsibility to ensure that goats grazing such land are inspected at intervals that are frequent enough to prevent the development of welfare problems; the frequency of inspection will vary according to density of stocking, availability of suitable feed, reliability of water supply, age and pregnancy status of stock, climatic conditions and management practices.

9.3 Castration

Non-surgical castration should be carried out on kids as early as management practices allow, preferably before 2 months of age.

Surgical castration without the use of anaesthesia should be confined to bucks under two months of age.

9.4 Dehorning

General anaesthesia or narcotic is required for all dehorning procedures in kids with the sole exception of the use of heat cautery on kids less than four weeks of age.

Dehorning should only be undertaken by a skilled and competent operator or by, or under the supervision of, a veterinary surgeon.

Dehorning by means of chemicals is not recommended.

9.5 Milking Practices - Dairy Goats

Lactating dairy goats in full lactation should not be left for more than 24 hours without relief by milking.

Careful management of the milking operation and the importance of proper milking machine function impact directly on longevity, production and prevalence and incidence of mastitis in dairy goats.

Milking machines should be checked and if necessary adjusted by a competent technician at least annually. Milking technique should be such that the risks of injury to the goat and transmission of disease are minimised.

9.6 Shearing

It is normal practice to shear fibre goats either once or twice per year. The procedure should be performed by a competent operator and care should be taken to prevent injuries.

Shearing stress should be kept to a minimum by avoiding undue yarding and travelling procedures, avoiding exposure to adverse weather and by supplying feed and water.

Freshly shorn goats should have access to permanent shelters or good natural shelter for up to six (6) weeks after shearing.

9.7 Health

Under the Animal Welfare Act it is an offence to have possession or custody of a sick or injured animal and fail to provide veterinary or other appropriate treatment.

Appropriate preventive treatment should be administered to goats for diseases that are common in a district or are occurring in a goat herd.

Suitable methods of administration of vaccines and medication should be followed.

Internal medication, such as vaccines and drenches, and external medication, such as dips and pour-on formulations, should be given in strict accordance with the manufacturers' instructions; overdosing may harm goats and under-dosing may result in failure to reach the required prophylactic or therapeutic effects.

Sick, injured or diseased goats should be given prompt and appropriate treatment or slaughtered. Separation of such goats from other goats is recommended until the condition resolves. When emergency slaughter is necessary, it should be performed on the farm in an humane manner.

Difficult births should be diagnosed promptly and does assisted only by a skilled and competent operator or by, or under the supervision of, a registered veterinary surgeon.

10. MUSTERING, DRIVING, YARDING AND DRAFTING

Goats should not be driven to the point of collapse.

The use of goading devices and dogs for the handling and moving of goats should be limited to the minimum necessary to complete the procedures.

Specific guidelines for the transportation of goats are contained in the Animal Welfare Guidelines – Road Transport of Livestock .

11. HUMANE DESTRUCTION OF GOATS

The method of slaughter should be effective and humane, causing sudden and painless death for the animal. The animal must be handled quietly beforehand to ensure it is not unnecessarily distressed or alarmed.

Effective and humane methods of euthanasia for goats include either shooting with a firearm or stunning with a captive bolt pistol followed by bleeding.

The methods recommended are those which are considered most suitable for a farm situation.

11.1 Use of Firearms and Captive-bolt Stunners

The use of firearms and captive-bolt pistols is subject to the provisions of the Firearms Act 1996.

The most efficient and widely available method of humanely destroying goats is a gunshot to the brain from close range. There may be legal restrictions on the use of firearms other than on private property, in which case assistance should be sought from veterinarians, the RSPCA or the Police.

The effectiveness of shooting is dependent upon the destruction of major centres at the back of the brain near the spinal cord. A common mistake is to direct the bullet too low, damaging frontal areas. Partial recovery may then occur.

The following aspects of firearms safety should be borne in mind:

- A .22 calibre rifle or .31 calibre humane killer pistol is adequate for humane destruction of goats.
- Any use of firearms is potentially hazardous.
- Persons other than the marksman and a handler should be cleared from the area or should stand well behind the marksman.
- Never fire while the animal is moving its head; wait for a quiet interval before firing.
- To provide maximum impact and the least possibility of misdirection, the range should be as short as circumstances permit.
- Whilst the humane killer pistol and captive-bolt stunner are designed to be pressed firmly on the head before being discharged, it is not desirable to do this with a standard rifle or pistol.

The **captive-bolt stunner** is safer since a blank cartridge is used. The operator does not have to be a marksman as the instrument's muzzle is firmly pressed against the animal's skull before firing. It must, however, be assumed that the animal has only been stunned and a follow-up method of ensuring death, such as bleeding out, is required.

Blank cartridges for the captive-bolt stunner are colour-coded according to the amount of charge they contain. The manufacturer's directions should be followed on the most appropriate blank cartridge for cattle. Regular maintenance of the captive-bolt stunner is essential for efficient stunning.

Two types of captive-bolt stunner are available. The concussion stunner has a wide mushroom-shaped

head which delivers a knock-out blow to the skull. The penetrating stunner has a narrow bolt which is driven a short distance into the brain.

The penetrating type of captive-bolt stunner is recommended, since it is more reliable at delivering an effective stun. The concussion stunner (non-penetrating) is not recommended.

11.2 Recommended Method

Figure 1: Recommended position and direction of fire for captive-bolt pistol or firearm - goats.



Using either a captive-bolt pistol or firearm, direct the instrument to the skull behind the horns as shown by the point of the arrow in Figure 1.

Aim the firearm in line with animal's mouth, and take care that no-one is in the line of fire. Kids may also be shot from the front, as for cattle, directing the shot at a point of intersection of lines taken from the base of each ear to the opposite eye. This method is not suitable in mature goats as the brain is located well back in the skull compared to other livestock.