

## About goats

- There are at least 200 different breeds of goat, with around six breeds in significant numbers in Tasmania.
- You can tell a goat's age by looking at its teeth.
- In most smallholding situations, a goat will live around 8 to 15 years, but some live longer.
- The gestation period for goats is usually 145 to 155 days (ie around five months).
- The largest breed of goat is the Saanen – does typically weigh 70 kgs and bucks 90 kgs.
- Some breeds of goat are used for fleece.
- While goat dairying is a small industry in Australia, worldwide there are more goats milked every day than cattle.
- Goats are independent but prefer to gather in family groups led by a senior doe.
- Goats are very inquisitive so fences must be adequate and small paddocks regularly rotated to reduce boredom and also aid pasture management.
- Goat meat (chevon) is the most widely consumed meat in the world and Australia is the world's largest exporter.
- Goats were first domesticated in central Asia 10,000 years ago.

## Goat welfare

- Always treat any disease or injury promptly.
- Angora goats need to be shorn every six months. They suffer if it is left any longer.
- Angoras may need to be crutched between shearings to reduce the risk of flystrike, especially before kidding.
- Goats should never be allowed to fall below body condition score 2.
- Don't tolerate anybody ill-treating your goats. People with short tempers should not own animals or work in the livestock industries.
- Dog attacks can be fatal for goats and distressful for owners. Always report any dog straying onto your property to the local council ranger.
- Don't hesitate to report any case of cruelty to goats (including neglect) to the RSPCA on 1300 139 947.

*The information in this pamphlet is general advice only and is intended for smallholders and hobby farmers. You should always get professional advice for your specific situation from your local vet.*

*Need more information?  
Visit us at  
[www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au](http://www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au)  
or contact your local  
vet.*



# GOATS and the Smallholder



## Some biosecurity tips

# Introducing goats onto your property

- If you are **buying goats**, try and do so from a property that you know practises good biosecurity.
- Before buying, **check the goats closely for obvious signs of disease** – eg big knees, diarrhoea, foot rot.
- If using a carrier to deliver your goats, make sure the **truck is clean**.
- **Isolate all new arrivals** from your other goats, for two weeks if possible, and monitor them closely for disease.
- **“Quarantine drench”** all new arrivals with a drench that was working on their origin property.
- Unless you know the vaccination history of the goats, assume they have had no vaccination at all. This means a **“5 in 1” or “6 in 1” vaccination** upon arrival and a follow up 4 to 6 weeks later.
- Check all fleece goats for **weed seeds**.
- Check that there are no hazards (such as loose wire) or toxic plants in the paddock.
- All of the above still apply if you agist goats onto your property (or if you borrow a buck).

# Goat health

- Understand the basics about internal parasites (worms) and **develop a worm control program**.
- **Check the goat’s feet regularly** for signs of footrot or overgrown hoof. Pare the feet as often as necessary to keep them in good shape.
- Understand the basics about lice and **develop a lice control program**.
- The best (and cheapest) feed for goats is **good pasture and browse mix**.
- **It is illegal to feed goats anything that contains “Restricted Animal Material” or RAM** – that is, any animal product such as meat, bone meal or fish meal. So, if you buy processed feed, check the label to ensure it’s suitable for goats.
- There are many plants that are **poisonous for goats** – they include oleander, rhododendrum, ragwort and rhubarb leaves. Hungry goats are more likely to be poisoned.
- Many cattle and sheep diseases can affect goats and vice versa.

***All livestock owners are required by law to report any signs of an emergency animal disease. If you think your goat is showing the signs, contact your local vet or the DPIPWWE all hours hotline on 1800 675 888***

# Farm practices

- **Make sure all your goats are properly tagged**. This is to enable rapid tracing in the event of an emergency animal disease and to help reduce the chances of stock theft.
- **Check your boundary fences** regularly to ensure they are stockproof. This is to keep your goats in and other livestock out of your property. It may also help prevent dog attacks.
- If you feed grain, introduce it into their diet gradually, otherwise you will kill them. If you feed pellets, check they are suitable for goats. Always feed hay and other supplements off the ground.
- If you buy in hay or grain, **check for weeds and weed seeds**.
- Whenever you use drench, lice treatments, vaccines or other chemicals, always read the label and, in particular, **follow the instructions about dosage rates and withholding periods**. Don’t assume that they are the same for all types of drench, vaccine etc.
- If you use herbicide or insecticide in your paddock, check the label for information about how long the paddock must be destocked.
- When you fertilise a paddock, you should keep goats off it for a few days if you’ve used superphosphate or 3 weeks if you’ve used a nitrogenous fertiliser or poultry manure.