

Approaching Goat Farming as a Business

Department of Animal Production and Marketing
Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF)
P.O. Box 513, Entebbe

Tel: 041-321040/320864
Mod: 077-482255
Fax: 320428
E-mail: eddp@ultonline.com

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1. What do I need to know?

The farming/management objective and resources available will determine a flock management system

- a. Define your farming objectives clearly. It could be to produce meat, milk and breeding stock for other farmers.

If the objective is breeding, then emphasis in management will be on high quality foundation stock, batch breeding, detailed breeding plan and good recording system.

If the objective is profit making, the emphasis in management will be on low cost infrastructure, simple management system, few staff to reduce labour costs and good financial management

- b. Know the resources needed/available to attain that farming objective

Resources to consider are:

- i. Labour - untrained either casual or regular and trained/skilled personnel

Goat management skills and experience of available staff and of veterinary personnel are important.

Remember very few animals per man are very uneconomical. The bigger the number of animals, the better are the returns to labour i.e. commercial enterprises with more than 140 goats is better than a medium scaled on say of 33 goats which in turn is better than a small scale of 16 goats.

Table 1: Labour unit per beast for various enterprises

Enterprise	Labour units (a)	No of beasts (b)	No of beats per labour
Tethering free range	18	16	0.9
Medium	18	33	1.8
Commercial	29	140	4.8

Milking goats	16	4	0.25
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Source: Adapted form MAAIF/BADEA/CMS-GAF Consult. 1999 Report

ii. Capital/finance

Is of two types: Fixed capital and circulating or working capital. Fixed capital is required for putting up farm structures like housing, fencing and equipment. Circulating capital is required to finance the production cycle e.g. purchase inputs such as feed supplements, drugs, equipment, forage seed, fertilizers, irrigation equipment, building materials, fencing.

Returns on initial capital are very important. Goats or sheep kept at commercial and medium scale and milking goats have higher returns to capital than small-scale enterprise.

Table 2: Uganda average efficiency indicators for small ruminant enterprises

Enterprise	Labour rate shs/mm	Returns to family labour shs/mm	Returns to initial capital (%)	Remarks
Goats&sheep tethering/free range	8,055	9,813	8.6	Returns to family labour higher than labour rate
Goats&sheep Medium	10,278	30,986	40.9	Returns to family labour higher than labour rate
Goats&sheep Commercial	16,379	81,431	54.5	Returns to family labour higher than labour rate
Goats&sheep Milking goats	12,500	50,406	49.6	Returns to family labour higher than labour rate

Source: Adapted form MAAIF/BADEA/CMS-GAF Consult. 1999 Report

Notes

Labour rate=Total cost of labour/no of man months

Returns to family labour=labour costs + net profit/no of man months

Returns to initial capital=profit/initial capital requirement

iii. Land and feed resources

Flock size will be affected by size and type of land including current fodder production. Is any land irrigatable for forage? Are the rights to land long or short term?

Feed resources are divided into maintenance and production rations. Most of the small ruminants in Uganda are fed on maintenance rations due to lack of planned objectives. The current production systems are low input, low output type i.e. low productivity

types. This has to change. There is need to invest into providing the production ration to achieve targets for instance attaining a particular weight at a certain age through feed supplements etc.

iv. Goats

Availability as foundation stock.

2. Practice good enterprise management

Goat management entails combining in a prudent (well organized) manner all phases of production i.e. breeding. Feeding, health and marketing.

i. Breeding carry out proper breeding how?

- Get the right type of breed for your purpose or farming objective
- Avoid in breeding, breed unrelated animals. Male to female ratio of 1:30
- Make and follow mating plans
- Carry out selections, retain big animals if for meat production
- Remember the important considerations in small ruminant reproduction shown overleaf in table 3.

Table 3: Important considerations

Considerations	Goats	Sheep
Breeding season	Varies with breed and climate	All year round but varies with breed and climate
Puberty	Usually 5months	5 –12 months
Age at 1 st service	Male 7-8months, Female 9-18months	Male 12-18 months, Female 8-12 months
Oestrus cycles	19-21 days	15-19 days
Duration of oestrus	24 – 96 hours (usually 36-40hrs)	18-24 hours
Ovulation	24-48hrs after start of oestrus	25-30 after on set of heat
Gestation	150 days (145-156 days)	5 months (144-155 days)

ii. Feeding – ensure proper feeding of small ruminants How?

When feeding goats target goats with special needs for growth, conception/parturition (pregnancy, lactation and racing to cater for different requirements for energy, protein and minerals. Indigenous goats eat 2-3% body weight in dry matter.

iii. Know how to age the animals

Aging of a goat is known by its teeth

(Scan and insert picture here)

iv. Health – ensure good health how?

To ensure good health of ruminants, carry out preventive and curative measures through vaccinations at the right time e.g. kids are usually vaccinated at 6 weeks of age against a number of diseases e.g. pulpy kidney, toxæmia and tetanus and CCPP vaccine is given annually. Prompt treatment in case of doubt call a Vet.

A good keeper is an observant one. The normal parameters for goat are: Temperature (39 centigrade), respiration rate (15-12 per minute, heart rate 90-99 beat/minute
For sheep normal temperature is 40 centigrade.

A good relationship between a Veterinarian and producers will help achieve increased production. The role of a Vet includes treatment, prevention and technical guidance. Role of production technicians include appropriate practices and management for maintenance of health all lead to increase production efficiency. Efficient in production of farm animals is defined as production per unit of food per animal.

$$\text{Efficiency} = \frac{\text{Product}}{\text{Food eaten}} \times 100\%$$

v. Follow good goat husbandry practices

- Housing – Proper housing with enough space for the goats and with good lighting and ventilation is important. Permanent housing pen 1.5metre square + exercise yard + feed rack and water trough. Permanent buck pen/kidding pen per Doe: 3-metre square.
- Stocking rate - Correct stocking rate for animals on free range. Guide: 1-3 total livestock units (TLU) = 250Kg about 8-15 goats per Ha.
- Clean watering and feeding utensils
- Animal care
- Record keeping
- Annual planning
- Goat management

vi. Good marketing how?

Aim to market your products when the demand is high. Ensure there is a ready market for your products and that the products are of good quality in order to fetch a good price.

The farmer should aim at making profits all the time. Small ruminant farming should be run as a business.