
Browsing Academy

DIRECT MARKETING OF GOATS IN CALIFORNIA



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When you start a goat enterprise, you have several marketing options open to you. Examples of potential enterprises would include:

- Breeding stock
- Fire control – fuels reduction, fuels discontinuity
- Brush control and weed abatement
- Selling at Auction and farmers markets
- Direct niche Marketing to restaurants and ethnic groups

Direct marketing can be an effective marketing approach for selling cull females, wethers and older bucks (depending on the ethnic market). It can provide consistent cash flow during the production year due to your receiving higher prices than selling at auction. This paper will focus on how to get started with direct marketing in California. The direct marketing model is based on experiences of Goats Unlimited, which have been direct marketing goats to restaurants and ethnic groups in California since 1995. They currently direct market 75 cull females and wethers per year to restaurants. Another 60 wether goats are sold live to ethnic groups and 80 wethers into stocker programs for brush and fire control.

Legal Requirements

When direct marketing to restaurants or general public, you must understand California requirements for selling, which is included with this publication. These regulations are developed and enforced by the California Department of Food and Agriculture Meat and Poultry Inspection Branch (916-654-0504).

If you are going to sell a slaughtered goat to a restaurant or a consumer who is not buying a live animal, it must be slaughtered and processed at a USDA inspected facility. The closest facility in the northern foothills would be Johansen's, located in Orland (530-865-3287). Johansen's Meat (530-865-3287) slaughters goats Monday through Friday. The charge is \$30 per goat. You should contact Johansen's to arrange a time to bring the goats.

Consumers who purchase a live animal do not have to use USDA inspected facilities. They can use either a mobile slaughterer or at a state licensed custom livestock slaughterhouse. However, meat slaughtered through these two avenues could not be resold to another consumer or restaurant. If you have any questions, you should contact the CDFA Meat and Poultry Inspection branch.

Carcass Characteristics



Dr. Frank Pinkerton has written on goat carcass yield and quality. He notes that goats do not marble well as they lay down very little subcutaneous fat. They can store body fat around internal organs and over the lateral ribcage and brisket during periods of high nutrient intake (for example, during lush spring growth in California).

Goat processors seem to pay particular attention to dressing percent and to "muscling" or "meatiness", both terms reflecting an assessment of meat-to-bone ratios. However, processors do prefer young goats (less than 40 lb live weight) to show considerable fat deposition around the kidneys and heart. Experienced goat buyers are quite adept at palpating the loin/rib area of a live kid and predicting degree of muscling and kidney fat and, accordingly, the visual and commercial appeal of the carcass to buyers. Contrarily, older, heavier carcasses are discriminated against if they have more than a (poorly defined) minimum amount of cover.

The dressing percentage of slaughter goats may be influenced by age, weight, sex, body condition, amount of gut fill at slaughter, whether the carcass is weighed hot or cold and, of course, by the number of body components included in the yield calculation. Dividing the unshrunk liveweight into the weight of the hot carcass and kidneys but without liver, heart, skin, head, feet and viscera will yield dressing percent values in the 45-52% range.

The interactions among the individual factors affecting dressing percentage are great, making it rather difficult to accurately predict carcass yield or quality by visual examination of the live goat. If you split the carcass between the 12th and 13th rib, you will find 60% of the weight of the carcass in the forequarter and 40% in the hindquarter.

The effects of castration based on research study indicates that intact males are heavier per day of age, make more efficient gains but have a higher percent of their weight in the lower value forequarters. Castrates show more carcass quality (improved cover) and generally sell for more per pound, except in specialized markets taking larger, more mature bucks. Castration may have an adverse impact on daily gain.

Delivery

Carcass delivery should be in a refrigerated truck. Meridian Meat Company can deliver to the Sacramento and San Francisco area. They have a regular delivery route for lambs and are willing to take goats. Goats Unlimited was able to negotiate a deal with Northern Refrigerated to deliver carcasses to the Bay Area and south. You can also ship carcasses or frozen cuts using next day delivery through Federal Express.

Who Is Your Target Audience?

The following are the target markets and specifications that Goats Unlimited provides with their direct marketing enterprise. Please use this table only as a starting point.

Target Market	Target Market Specifications	
Greek		Young goat 3-4 months of age weighing 45 pounds. Goats have an average dressing percentage of 42% which yields a 19 pound carcass (19 pounds carcass / 45 pounds X 100 = 42% Dressing Percentage)
Hispanic		Young bucks 4-5 months of age weighing 65 pounds
European		Cull females and wethers at 6-7 months of age weighing 75 pounds. They pay shipping and slaughter charge to Goats Unlimited, who then reimburses those two businesses.
Muslim		Cull bucks and wethers weighing 110 pounds and carrying obvious finish. There are religious differences between and within groups.
Jamaican		Yearling bucks or older that weigh 140 pounds. They like a strong meat flavor. 45 days prior to selling, the goats are castrated with a burdizzo clamp. They are sold when the nut starts to crinkle. There is a big Jamaican holiday the first week of December.

\Getting a Consistent Product



Before selling anything to someone else, you should eat what you are producing. You need firsthand knowledge of carcass yield and desirability of the eating experience. This will mean slaughtering animals for your own consumption. When you contemplate a management change, you need to factor in the potential impact on carcass quality. Remember, whoever buys your goats wants a consistent, quality eating experience.

You or someone from your operation should also know how to cook the different cuts based on the age and sex of the goat. Compiling recipes and then giving them out when selling a goat can be an excellent marketing tool.

Here are the carcass quality characteristics from Goats Unlimited that they are consistently getting with their program:

Goats Unlimited Carcass Quality Results - 2000					
Live Wt (pounds)	Dressing Percentage ¹	Ribeye (square inches)	Conformation Score ²	Lean Maturity Score	Carcass Length (inches)
50	47%	1.6	12	Choice	34-36
60-70	44-48%	1.9	10	Choice	37-39
70-75	48-49%	2.0	10-11	Choice	40
76-80	48%	2.2	12-13	Prime	40-42

¹ Dressing percentage is the carcass hot weight with kidneys but without the head, legs (removed at knee and hock), skin, heart, and liver.

² Conformation Score out of rating from 1 to 15

Other carcass traits of interest from Goats Unlimited:

- Leg Circumference: ranges from 17-20 inches depending on age (weight)
- Fat cover over the 12th rib averages 0.1 inch or less
- Flank streaking fluctuates around modest
- Skeletal maturity score is always A because the goats are less than 7 months of age.

Here is an example of the kind of yield of Goats Unlimited is getting from the carcass.

Whole Carcass Weight (pounds)	Weight of Processed Product (pounds)							
	Bone	Cut & wrapped	Rolled shoulder (boneless)	Chops	Rolled leg (boneless)	Stew	Riblets	Shanks
36	10	26	6	4.5	5.5	4	2.5	3.5
45	12.5	32.5	6	7.5	7	4	4.5	3.5

It is important to know the varying requirements of the ethnic consumers you are supplying. These requirements may include availability for a specific holiday, slaughter technique for religious purposes, age and/or sex of goat.

Know What Your Goats Are Eating



In order to achieve that consistent product, you must understand the forage and browsing conditions the goats have been under. Goats Unlimited has found that if you are cruising goats (topping off brush), then goats should gain 12-15 pounds per month or 60-75 pounds over a 5 month browsing period. Goats coming off this kind of feed would be able to spend 2-3 weeks on whole corn, blackeyed beans, and alfalfa hay before being marketed.

However, if you have been grazing goats for weed control and grazing browse and other vegetation more severely, gains will only be around 5 pounds per month or 25 pounds over a 5 month browsing period. These goats would need to spend time cruising browse or forage and / or a longer time on a corn, bean, and hay ration before they would be ready to be direct marketed.



Whether goats have been cruising or grazing for weeds, they will need to spend a couple of weeks on the corn, bean, and hay ration. Goats Unlimited will keep goats penned up for a 2-3 week period and feed a ration of alfalfa, whole corn, and cull blackeyed beans. The alfalfa is fed in feeders that can accommodate 16 goats (8 on a side – see photo at left).

Goats less than 4.5 months of age receive 0.25 pounds each of corn and blackeyed peas per day. Goats over 4.5 months of age receive 0.5 pounds each of those same two ingredients per day. This time period helps the goats put on finish, improve dressing percentage, and reduce the amount of lactic acid in the muscles. Remember, these goats have been out ranging for feed and have developed muscle with little fat. This feeding period has enabled Goats Unlimited to turn out a consistent, quality product.

Remember, goats are marketed as lean. In markets throughout the United States, overly fat goats are being discounted in price as much as 10-20%. While penned up, goats have access to fresh water, minerals, and sea kelp. Goats Unlimited has developed a custom mineral mix that is less than 10% salt. The mix has a 1.5 Calcium: 1 Phosphorous ratio and contains chelated micro-minerals including zinc, selenium, copper and iodine. The mineral mix and sea kelp is also available to the goats when browsing.

Developing a Market

When you decide to direct market, you must build your market. This will mean making contacts and providing samples. When calling on a chef for the first time, Goats Unlimited brings a gift basket of leg, shoulder, and ribs for them to sample. They also make it easy for the chef to buy and use their product. For example, while a restaurant may pay for slaughter and shipping, Goats Unlimited will directly pay for slaughter and shipping include those costs in their bill to get reimbursed.. This way, the restaurant only has to make out one check. The idea is to make things as simple as possible.

You will also need to know about different ethnic holidays because they will present prime marketing opportunities. As mentioned previously, the Jamaicans have a big holiday the first week of December. Christmas, New Year's, and Easter can offer increased demand for goat. Muslims celebrate three major holidays: Ramadan (30 days of fasting), id al Fitr (Festival of Breaking of the Fast), and id al Adha (Festival of Sacrifice).

Different holidays may mean different preferences for the goats. For example, at Ramadan, they prefer 60-70 pound bucks over wethers. During Breaking of the Fast, they prefer yearling bucks (two toothed) unblemished (intact and with horns).

You can check the new 2000 Census or other demographic data to find out what potential ethnic groups exist in your area. Attending livestock auctions or sales featuring goats can help you make contacts. While making these contacts, invite them to your ranch to see the goats and find out what makes a desirable goat in their eyes. If you can provide what they want on a consistent basis, you should have no trouble direct marketing.

Final Thoughts

This paper has hopefully provided a useful introduction to direct marketing of goats. If you need more assistance, contact Roger Ingram at 530-889-7385 or rsingram@ucdavis.edu.