

Co-Grazing Meat Goats and Beef Cattle Has Many Advantages

NC STATE EXTENSION

Meat Goat Notes

Why graze meat goats with beef cattle?

1. To clean up pastures of unwanted vegetation.

- a. Goats are natural browsers
- b. Given the opportunity, goats will select over 60% of their daily ration from brush (multiflora rose, saplings, young leafy trees, black locust, briars, brambles, sumac, honeysuckle, privet, Virginia trumpet creeper, etc.) and broadleaf weeds (pigweed, dock, horseweed, wild lettuce, lambsquarters, poison ivy, etc.) over herbaceous species such as fescue, bluegrass, clover, orchardgrass or crabgrass pastures
- c. In that respect, goats do not compete much with beef cattle

2. To increase productivity per acre of land grazed by beef cattle

- a. Recommendation: adding 1 to 2 does per head of beef cattle, depending on the amount of unwanted vegetation, will not decrease beef cattle production
- b. Study conducted at the Mountain Research Station over 4 grazing seasons:
 - Stocking rate: 1.7 steers per acre + 3.4 goats per acre versus 1.7 steers alone per acre
 - Paddocks where goats and beef grazed/browsed together were clean of brambles, sumac, poison ivy, honeysuckle, pigweed and black locust. In those paddocks, multiflora roses bushes only averaged 2 feet in height.
 - Paddocks grazed only by steers had significant number of multiflora rose bushes with an average height of 6 feet, producing seeds and getting bigger.

3. To decrease gastrointestinal parasite worm load

- a. Gastrointestinal parasites from goats will not survive in the stomach of cattle, and gastrointestinal parasites from cattle will not survive in the stomach of goats.
- b. Many broadleaf weeds and browse contains tannins, a compound that has been shown to have a detrimental effect on some gastrointestinal parasites.

4. Other considerations

- a. Upgrading perimeter fences is a necessity as goats can escape easily.
- b. Predator control against roaming dogs, coyotes, other carnivorous wildlife

- c. If pasture is in short supply, goats will be at a disadvantage. In that case, goats should be moved to another pasture or into a woodlot.

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