Domestic goat

*Capra hircus*

Fact Sheet

**Status:** Common

**Distribution:** Since domestication, these goats have been spread all over the world by humans. Their wild counterpart, *Capra aegagrus*, is a common species and found mainly in Europe, Central Asia, Asia Minor, and the Middle East.

**Habitat:** *Capra hircus* has been kept successfully in all climates. Feral groups are found usually in rugged mountain country, rocky crags, and alpine meadows.

**Diet:** Need a year-round supply of roughage, such as pasture, browse or well-cured hay but can survive on very thin deposits of grass. As mentioned above *C. hircus* requires grass for grazing, but prefers to browse brush lands and a varied selection of pasture plants, including non-noxious weeds.

**Length:** From 3 and one-half feet to over five and one-half feet.

**Weight:** 19.8 to 248.6 lbs (9 to 113 kg) However, they usually average around 99 lbs (45 kg)

**Reproduction:** Humans usually control the breeding behavior of these goats, but whether in the wild or in captivity breeding follows a polygynous system. Most breeding cycles occur in late summer to early winter. The female goat has an 18-21 day estrus cycle or "season." The doe's "season" lasts from a few hours to two or three days. The gestation period is five months. Twins are common.

**Longevity:** Eight to twelve years.

**General Description:** Males have a beard, horns, a rank odor, and are generally larger than the females. The odor stems from sex glands. The hair is generally straight, however some breeds have a wool undercoat. Coat color varies. There are many different breeds of *C. hircus* due to its long history of domestication.

**Behavior:** Domestic goats have a well-developed herding instinct and prefer to be in groups of 2 or more. Goats are diurnal, and spend most of the daylight hours grazing. In the wild there is a hierarchy structure in the herds, with the males competing for their place in the hierarchy by engaging in head butting contests. However, in captivity, much of this animals daily social behavior is controlled by humans.

**Did you know?** On a worldwide basis, more people drink the milk of goats than any other single animal. Goat milk can successfully replace cow milk in diets of those who are allergic to cow milk.

**Where can you find them?** Farms, some farms exclusively raise these animals they can also be found in some zoos.
Domestic goat

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
Domestic Goat

Conservation status: Domesticated

Scientific classification
Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Mammalia
Order: Artiodactyla
Family: Bovidae
Subfamily: Caprinae Genus: Capra
Species: C. aegagrus
Subspecies: C. a. hircus
Trinomial name Capra aegagrus hircus
(Linnaeus, 1758)

This article is about the domestic species. For general information, including mythology and wild species, see Capra (genus). For other uses of the term, see goat (disambiguation).

The domestic goat (Capra aegagrus hircus) is a domesticated subspecies of the Wild Goat of south-west Asia and eastern Europe. Domestic goats are one of the oldest domesticated species. For thousands of years, they have been utilized for their milk, meat, hair, and skins all over the world. In the last century they have also gained some popularity as pets. Female goats are referred to as does or nannies, intact males as bucks or billies. Castrated males are wethers, offspring are kids. Goat meat is sometimes called chevon.

Goats seem to have been first domesticated roughly 10,000 years ago in the Zagros Mountains of Iran.[1] Ancient cultures and tribes began to keep them for easy access to milk, hair, meat, and skins. Domestic goats were generally kept in herds that wandered on hills or other grazing areas, often tended by goatherds who were frequently children or adolescents, similar to the more widely known shepherd. These methods of herding are still utilized today.

History
Historically, goathide has been used for water and wine bottles in both traveling and transporting wine for sale. It has also been used to produce parchment,
which was the most common material used for writing in Europe until the invention of the printing press.

Goat products
A goat is said to be truly useful both when alive and dead, providing meat and milk while the skin provides hide. In fact, a charity is involved in providing goats to impoverished people in Africa. The main reason cited was that goats are easier to manage than cattle and have multiple uses.

Meat
The taste of goat meat, called chevon, is said to be similar to veal or venison, depending on the age of the goat. It can be prepared in a variety of ways including stewed, baked, grilled, barbecued, minced, canned, or made into sausage. It is also healthier than mutton as it is lower in fat and cholesterol and comparable to chicken. It is quite popular in the Middle East, South Asia, and in Africa, though less so in the United States.

Other parts of the goat including organs are also equally edible. Special delicacies include the brain and liver. The head and legs of the goat are also smoked and used to prepare unique spicy dishes.

Milk and cheese
Goats' milk is more easily digested than cows' milk and is recommended for infants and people who have difficulty with cows' milk. The curd is much smaller and more digestable. Moreover it is naturally homogenized since it lacks the protein agglutinin.

Contrary to popular opinion, goats' milk is not naturally bad tasting. When handled properly, from clean and healthy goats, in a sanitary manner, and cooled quickly, the flavor is unremarkable and inoffensive. Also, it is necessary to separate the strong smelling buck from the dairy does, as his scent will rub off on them and will taint the milk.

Goats' milk is also used to make popular cheeses such as Rocamadour and feta.

Skin
Goat skin is still used today to make gloves, boots, and other products that require a soft hide. Kid gloves, popular in Victorian times, are still made today. The Black Bengal breed, native to Bangladesh, provides high-quality skin.

Fiber
Cashmere goats produce a fiber, Cashmere wool, which is one of the best in the world. Cashmere fiber is very fine and soft, and grows beneath the guard hairs. Ideally there is a proportionally smaller amount of guard hair (which is undesirable and cannot be spun or dyed) to the cashmere fiber. Most goats produce cashmere fiber to some degree, however the Cashmere goat has been specially bred to produce a much higher amount of it with fewer guard hairs. The Angora breed produces long, curling, lustrous locks of mohair. The entire body of the goat is covered with mohair and there are no guard hairs. The locks can be six inches or more in length. Goats do not have to be slaughtered to harvest the wool, which is instead sheared (cut from the body) in the case of Angora goats, or combed, in the case of Cashmere goats. The fiber is made into products such as sweaters. Both cashmere and mohair are warmer per ounce than wool and are not scratchy or itchy or as allergenic as wool sometimes is. Both fibers
command a higher price than wool, compensating for the fact that there is less fiber per goat than there would be wool per sheep.

In South Asia, Cashmere is called *pashmina* (Persian *pashmina* = fine wool) and these goats are called *pashmina* goats (often mistaken as sheep). Since these goats actually belong to the upper Kashmir and Laddakh region, their wool came to be known as cashmere in the West. The *pashmina* shawls of Kashmir with their intricate embroidery are very famous.

Feeding goats
Goats are reputed to be willing to eat almost anything. Contrary to this reputation, they are quite fastidious in their habits, preferring to browse on the tips of woody shrubs and trees, as well as the occasional broad leaved plant. It can fairly be said that goats will eat almost anything in the botanical world. Their plant diet is extremely varied and includes some species which are toxic or detrimental to cattle and sheep. This makes them valuable for controlling noxious weeds and clearing brush and undergrowth. They will seldom eat soiled food or water unless facing starvation.

Goats do not actually consume garbage, tin cans, or clothing, although they will occasionally eat items made primarily of plant material, which can include wood. Their reputation for doing so is most likely due to their intensely inquisitive and intelligent nature: they will explore anything new or unfamiliar in their surroundings. They do so primarily with their prehensile upper lip and tongue. This is why they investigate clothes and sometimes washing powder boxes (e.g. Daz) by nibbling at them.

Reproduction
In some climates goats are, like humans, able to breed at any time of the year. In northern climates and among the Swiss breeds, the breeding season commences as the day length shortens, and ends in early spring. Does of any breed come into heat every 21 days for from 2-48 hours. A doe in heat typically flags her tail often, stays near the buck if one is present, becomes more vocal, and may also show a decrease in appetite and milk production for the duration of the heat.

Bucks (intact males) of Swiss and northern breeds come into rut in the fall as with the doe's heat cycles. Rut is characterized by a decrease in appetite, obsessive interest in the does, fighting between bucks, display behavior, and, most notably, a strong, musky odor. This odor is singular to bucks in rut--the does do not have it unless the buck has rubbed his scent onto them or the doe is in actuality a hermaphrodite--and is instrumental in bringing the does into a strong heat.

In addition to live breeding, artificial insemination has gained popularity among goat breeders, as it allows for rapid improvement because of breeder access to a wide variety of bloodlines.

Gestation length is approximately 150 days. Twins are the usual result, with single and triplet births also common. Less frequent are litters of quadruplet, quintuplet, and even sextuplet kids. Birthing, known as *kidding*, generally occurs uneventfully with few complications. The mother often eats the placenta, which gives her much needed nutrients, helps staunch her bleeding, and reduces the lure of the birth scent to predators. After kidding, the kids conceal themselves in
small places and lay immobile for hours at a time while their dam feeds. Upon her return, she calls for them and they come out to nurse and play.

*Freshening* (coming into milk production) occurs at kidding. Milk production varies with the breed, age, quality, and diet of the doe; dairy goats generally produce between 660 to 1,800 L (1,500 and 4,000 lb) of milk per 305 day lactation. On average, a good quality dairy doe will give at least 6 lb of milk per day while she is in milk, although a first time milker may produce less, or as much as 16 lb or more of milk in exceptional cases. Meat, fiber, and pet breeds are not usually milked and simply produce enough for the kids until weaning.

**Goat breeds**

Goat breeds fall into four categories, though there is some overlap between them; meaning that some are dual purpose.

**Feral**
- Auckland Island Goat (extinct)

**Dairy**
- Alpine: French Alpine, British Alpine, American Alpine
- Golden Guernsey
- La Mancha
- Nigerian Dwarf
- Nubian
- Oberhasli
- Rove
- Saanen
- Sable Saanen
- Toggenburg
- Kinder

**Fibre**
- Angora
- Cashmere
- Pygora

**Meat**
- Boer
- Kiko
- Rove
- Spanish
- Fainting

**Pet**
- Pygmy
- Nigerian Dwarf

**Skin**
- Black Bengal

**Wild**
- Tahr
- Cretan kri-kri (*Capra aegagrus creticus*)
- Ibex, including the Alpine Ibex
Showing
Goat breeders' clubs frequently hold shows, where goats are judged on traits relating to conformation, udder quality, evidence of high production and longevity. People who show their goats usually keep registered stock and the offspring of award winning animals command a higher price. Registered stock in general is usually higher priced if for no other reason than that records have been kept proving its ancestry and the production and other data of its sire, dam, and other ancestors. A registered dairy doe is usually less of a gamble than buying any dairy doe at random (as at an auction or sale barn) because of these records and the reputation of the breeder.

Children's clubs such as 4-H also allow goats to be shown. Children's shows often include a showmanship class, where the cleanliness and presentation of both the animal and the exhibitor as well as the handler's ability and skill in handling the goat are scored. In a showmanship class, conformation is irrelevant since this is not what is being judged.

The Dairy Goat Scorecard (milking does) - is the system used for judging shows in the U.S. and is as follows:
General Appearance: 30 points (This includes breed characteristics, head, shoulders, legs and feet, and topline- the back and rump)
Dairy Character: 20 points (the doe should be lean and angular, not meaty, and show evidence of high production).
Body Capacity: 20 points (the doe should be large and strong with a wide, deep barrel).
Mammary System: 30 points (udder should be productive and very well attached so as to be held up high away from possible injury, teats should be of a good size and shape for easy milking).

In all the perfect dairy goat would score all 100 points, and this is the standard the goats are judged by. Young stock and bucks are judged by different scorecards which place more emphasis on the other three categories; general appearance, body capacity, and dairy character.