

Why do Goats Get Such a Bad Rap?

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Since ancient times it seems that goats have acquired a bad reputation as stinky, trouble-making, garbage eating animals. What's the real story?

1. Goats Eat Garbage (T/F)

False! Goats are browsers. That means that they prefer to reach for their food, similar to deer or antelope. They prefer ivy, underbrush, tender young leaves, and will most definitely eat the buds off your prize rose bushes if allowed to! When kept in a confined situation they are fed good quality grass and legume hay, and grain. They will not eat food or drink water that has been fouled with manure or dirt. Goats have earned their reputations for eating garbage for two reasons:

First, they are much like 2 year old human children in that they learn about their world by tasting it! Just like a toddler, they like to put everything in their mouths to learn about it. They will mouth buckets, fence posts, tires, laundry, and of course, tin cans! On occasion they will even swallow something that is not particularly good for them, just like a human child or a puppy.

The second reason for goats' garbage-eating reputation comes from their ability to survive in almost any kind of conditions. Although normally picky eaters they will eat leftovers like apple peelings, stale bread, slimy vegetables, thornbushes, and most anything else to stay alive. Goats are a valued livestock throughout arid Africa and in poor sections of India and other parts of the world because of their ability to forage and thrive in poor conditions where cattle and other types of livestock would likely starve.



2. Goats Smell Bad (T/F)

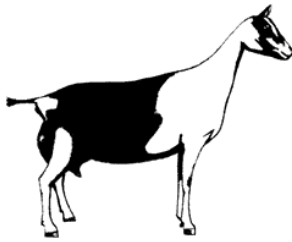
Well....it depends! Female goats (does), baby goats (kids) and neutered males (wethers) have no more odor than horses, cattle, dogs and cats, and often less. They hate mud and mess and tend to keep themselves very clean. Unfortunately it is the breeding males of the species who have earned the reputation for all goats as stinky. The mature males (bucks) really are! Phew! They have a very strong odor that most people find offensive, but the female goats find quite irresistible. For that reason, most goat breeders keep their breeding bucks as far away from the house as possible.

3. Goats Will Butt You (T/F)

False! Goats are normally non-aggressive toward people. If raised with a lot of contact with people they are very sociable and enjoy being petted and played with. Even wild goats will flee rather than pick a fight unless forced into a corner. They do however fight and play amongst themselves by head-banging.

4. Goats are Troublemakers (T/F)

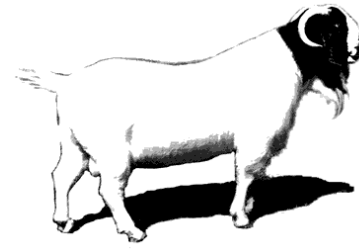
False! Goats are naturally curious, intelligent animals, so will get into all sorts of things they aren't supposed to unless adequately fenced.



Dairy



Fiber



Meat

OK, so they aren't too bad...but what good are they?

Well...many historians believe that goats were the first animals to be domesticated. In many parts of the world they are a main source of protein. They provide milk, meat and hides for clothing and shelter. In the United States, goat milk cheese is a popular gourmet item, and goat milk fudge is a dreamy delight! Goat milk has been used as a soothing skin treatment in soaps, lotions and balms since ancient times. Cleopatra even bathed in goat milk! Some goats are valued for their long, silky fleece or cashmere that can be woven into clothing and rugs. Some goats are used as pack animals since they can easily navigate rough terrain and are easier on the environment than horses. Goats can be trained to pull carts. Did you know that goats are even being used as fire and brush control? Some parts of the country are leasing goat herds to clear away brush and weeds that can cause fire hazards. Of course many people just enjoy having goats as pets and companions.



"And thou shalt have goat's milk enough for thy food, and for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance of thy maidens." Proverbs 27:27