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Goat is one of the world's smallest domesticated livestock, have been actively managed for food and fiber earlier and longer than cattle and sheep. The goat is a a multipurpose animal to provide *milk, meat, hide, fur and manure for soil*.

Goats are animals that **easily adapt to different pasture types**, so therefore we often refer to them as "*opportunistic animals*".

Goats are primarily browsers. They browse shrubs to a far greater degree than sheep or cattle. Goats used to spend 61% of their active feeding time browsing and 39% grazing grass and forbs.

Browsing lifestyle

- Goats are very **active foragers**, able to cover a wide area in search of scarce plant materials.
- They have mobile upper lips and tongues that enable them to pick *small leaves, flowers, fruits and other plant parts* even between thorns thus choosing only the most nutritious available feed.
- **Ability to stand on their hind legs** stretch up for long period to browse tree leaves.
- They **can even climb trees** in order to reach parts of tree they prefer.
- Utilize rough, mountainous area which sheep and cattle avoid.
- Goats do not graze so low on the ground as sheep and cattle do, goats preferred grazing range is between *10-150 cm grass heights*.

The goat's ability to select higher quality feedstuff.

- Mainly *tree, shrub leaves* and *grasses*.
- *Browse* is the preferred feed of goats.
- The preference of goats for consuming browse **can be used on the control of bush encroachment**.
- Control the re-growth of chopped-down bushes.
- **Goat browse vegetation from the top downwards** while sheep follow the opposite pattern.
- 80% of intake can be browse.
- Where browse is not available, goats are capable of utilizing grass and other crop residues such as *cereal straws*.
- **Can walk long distances in search of feed.**
- They choose forage.

Feeding habits of goats

- Can distinguish between *sweet, sour, bitter and salty*.
- Show a **higher tolerance for bitter tasting feed** than most other ruminant e.g. cattle.
- Goats are **usually blamed for the deterioration of veld** actually caused by other animals.
- Do not thrive well on single feed for long time.
- Prefer to **select from a variety of feeds**.
- Nibble at shoots and leaves of growing plants, reject stems.
- **Less susceptible to intestinal disease.**

Feeding habits of goats depends on the following:

- Ecology.
- Season of the year in the same location.

- Availability of forages.
- **Diurnal patterns:** In general, morning feeding periods are dominated by browsing while grazing is the dominant activity during the afternoon.

Grazing lifestyle

- Goats exhibit very **rapid seasonal shifts** between *shrubs*, *grasses* and *forbs*, depending on availability and their seasonal nutritive value.
- Select grasses when the protein content and digestibility are high, but to switch to browse when the latter overall nutritive value may be higher.
- **Goats are capable of adapting their grazing preferences** to the availability of grass and bush.
- When bushes decrease, the goats feed increasingly on grass.
- Less selective in their grazing habits.
- More flexible on their **grazing habits**.
- Consume certain **pioneer grasses**, hardy grasses and **unpalatable shrubs** refused by sheep.
- Can efficiently digest coarse and **fibrous feeds**.

Conclusion

Sheep, goats and cattle and other livestock animals have different **grazing behaviors**.

Among the ruminant species, goats are able to survive and even flourish in extremely hostile environments. These factors combined with dietary versatility, adaptability and a hardy constitution have made goats a primary livestock animal for most of the world. Goat farming can be

profitable occupation of a farmer and, in some rural areas, plays an important role to control [bush encroachment](#).

Reference

[Select & Start Your Own Industry, by NPCS Board of Consultants & Engineers, pag. 217](#)