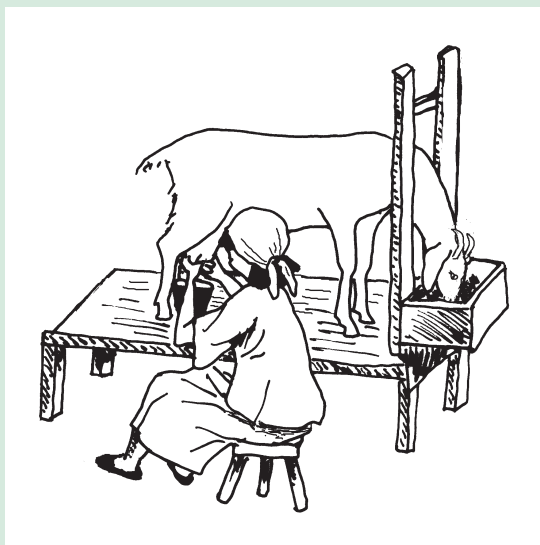


Goat keeping in the tropics

Agrodok 7 - Goat keeping in the tropics



Agrodok 7

Goat keeping in the tropics

Carl Jansen
Kees van den Burg

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Foreword

Agromisa's Question and Answer Service receives many questions on goat keeping. We therefore have written this practical Agrodok on goat keeping. The aim is to provide basic information for those who work directly with the small-scale goat farmers in the tropics.

It is not our intention to be comprehensive. For those who wish to know more: a number of good in-depth books are mentioned in the bibliography.

In writing this book, we made use of materials of others. We wish to thank all those who have contributed to this Agrodok. We especially wish to thank Peter Hofs of the Tropical Animal Husbandry section of the Wageningen Agricultural University for his useful comments.

We hope that this booklet will be useful and interesting for the readers.

The Authors,
Wageningen, March 1991

Foreword to the second revised edition

In this second revised edition the chapter on nutrition and feeding has been improved by Arno Overgaag, one of Agromisa's animal husbandry experts. Dr. M.N.M. Ibrahim of the Department of Animal Sciences, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, reviewed the revised chapter and Robert Corner did the editing work. Barbera Oranje improved the pictures throughout the whole Agrodok. We are thankful to all of them, for their time and effort they spent on this.

We especially want to acknowledge OXFAM (UK and Ireland) in association with FARM-Africa, who have granted us permission to use some of the illustrations from their excellent publication: 'Improving Goat Production in the Tropics' (1996).

We are also grateful to ITDG Kenya and Baobab Newsletter (ALIN) who gave us permission to use an article on making salt licks.

Marg Leijdens, co-ordinator Agrodok Publications,
Wageningen, 2000

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1 Introduction - the importance of goat keeping

Goats play an important role in food production systems in developing countries. Their great popularity can be explained by their good adaptation to many different climates (ecological adaptation) and the many uses for which they can be kept.

Goats are especially important in developing countries: in 1981, 96% of the world's goat population of 496 million goats was to be found there (476 million). In those countries, goats make up 20% of the ruminants which are kept as livestock. Goats are particularly important in Africa and the Indian subcontinent (see table 1).

Table 1: Division of goats in the tropics and the subtropics
Source: Production Yearbook, Vol 33. FAO Rome

Region	Number (millions)	Percentage
Africa	144.7	41.3 %
East Asia	13.7	3.9 %
West Asia	52.7	15.1 %
Indian Sub-continent	109.8	31.4 %
Central America	10.9	3.1 %
South America	18.4	5.3 %
Total	350.2	100 %

1.1 The importance of goats

Goats are of high importance to people because of the many functions they provide: they serve as bank account which can be drawn upon when cash money is needed, kids are the interest given; they are used as gifts to strengthen relationships; they are used as sacrificial animal. Furthermore goats provide milk and meat which are high-grade food-stuffs for people.

Goats are much tougher than cattle, they are small animals and cost less per animal. Each farmer usually owns a number of goats. Goat keeping therefore touches on many people's lives.

1.2 Attractive properties

For the small-scale farmer, the goat has a number of attractive properties:

- The goat is a small animal. Compared to the big animals as cows its value is not very high. This means keeping goats is not too risky.
- It is easier to find feed for a small animal.
- Even small children can control them.
- It is a quickly maturing animal with a high fertility.
- Animals are regularly available for sale or other uses. Restoration of the herd size is also quickly done.
- Goats can maintain themselves well in poor and dry areas, where other ruminants do not succeed.
- In places where sleeping sickness is present, goats can still be kept where cows cannot survive, because there are resistant goat breeds.



Figure 1: Woman milking her goats (Adapted from: Baobab, 1998)