

REARING AND DWELLING HABITAT FOR GOATS AND SHEEP IN RAJASTHAN: AN OVERVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

Raising goats and sheep for backyard farming is economically less troublesome and easy to manage than other livestock. Goats are reared under extensive farming conditions, mainly for chevon and milk whereas Sheep mainly rear for wool and mutton purpose. The present article describes about the routine practices associated with sheep and goat farming in villages of Rajasthan.

GOAT FARMING

Goats are mainly reared by small scale farmers and backward communities. Extensive land is absolute unnecessary in case of farming of goats. Goat are more economical and productive than rearing of large ruminants. Goats does not need nutritious diet and can survive in extreme conditions. Goat farming can play an important role in uplifting the social livelihood of poor farmers (Poor man's cow). The age of sexual maturity in goat is 10 - 12 months and also it is a prolific breeder. Twins and triplets are most common in goats. A well-managed female can produce kids for about eight years. Pregnancy period in goats is about 145 -150 days or roughly five months. Goats mostly depend upon forage crop and tree leaves for their survivability, so there is absolute negligible cost involved for their maintenance. Post-harvest residues are excellent source of feed for goats. Goats are mostly browsers. Tree leaves of Neem (*Azadirachta indica*), Khejri (*Propolis cineraria*), locally known as 'loong' and leaves of Ber (*Zizyphus rotundifolia*) (locally known as 'pala') are mostly used as feed for goat in Rajasthan due to their availability in abundance. The common breeds found in Rajasthan are Sirohi, Jalawadi and Marwari. Poor farmers who are mostly nomads rear goats for only milk purpose. The poor villager (gadria) took the entire herd for grazing. Goats are known as ATM (Any Time Milk). Small flocks were rear for milk purpose while large flock kept for source of income in the form of meat. Dewasi (raika) and Gurjar communities mostly kept large number of goats and sheep together. The number can go up to 80 to 100 animals in one flock. At the time of famine they migrate from their home with animals. Large number of people rear 5 to 8 animal. Half to one litter milk produce by per milking animal. Goat house is made by shrub. Grains of Bajra given for supplementary diet during milking. Bucks are sold to the near market and local slaughter house. Goat are not only rear in rural area but also in catchment of urban area. Muslim community rear goat only for purpose of chevon.

SHEEP FARMING

Mostly the Dewasi and Gurjar communities in Rajasthan are involved in sheep farming. Sheep are mainly reared for wool and mutton purposes. Sheep farming is more economically other animals. Migration of sheep is a regular feature of sheep rearing in the western parts of Rajasthan. Sheep from southern parts of Jodhpur-Jaisalmer pass through Bali, Abu-road through Palanpur, reach up to river beds in Baroda, and Surat where they spend about two months. Usually, the farmers set out on their journey in winter and return to their homes in early monsoon. In Churu, Jhunjhunu and Sikar districts the sheep flocks are relatively stable and they migrate for short period from their home village to grazing areas in neighbouring villages when the local pastures are exhausted. Milk of sheep is useful in healing of fracture. Massage of sheep milk mixed with Haldi (*Curcuma longa*) at the swelled part of body and drinking of sheep milk is help in early healing of fracture. Sheep

wool is useful for making cloths. Like that of goats, Post-harvest residues is source of feed for sheep. Sheep utilize wasteland effectively and efficiently by consuming stubbles and destroy weeds. Sheep do not require expensive housing or equipment. Rearing practices and feeding habits do not require intensive labour. Sheep are able to survive without water longer than most of domestic animals. Sheep prefer to graze in the wind and cooler hours. Sheep irregularly travel 4 to 5 km a day. Sheep is a close grazer preferring short herbage. Mobile lips, sharp incisors below and a touch dental pad above help in feeding of forage by touch. Sheep can provide wool and mutton for market at two different periods, so the farmer does not need to depend on a single source of income. The gestation period of sheep is roughly five months and unlike goats these are seasonal breeders.