



Newsletter of the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service: A project of the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT)

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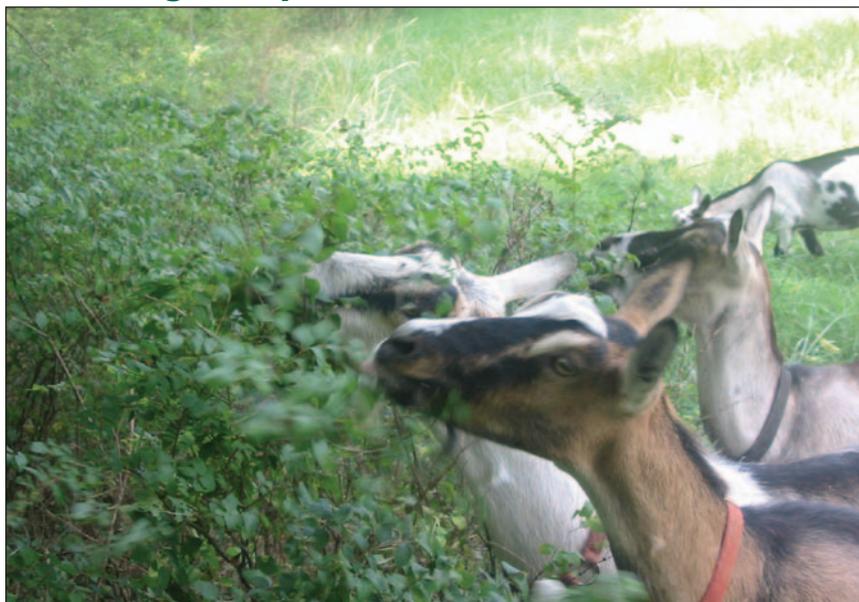
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Marketing Sheep and Goat Products



Well-controlled browsing animals can accomplish land management goals without chemicals or machines. Photo: Margo Hale, NCAT

Vegetation Management Services

The articles in this issue are adapted from ATTRA's new series of tips for marketing sheep and goat products written by NCAT Agriculture Specialists Linda Coffey and Margo Hale. See page 3 for more information about the series.

Sheep and goats can be used to control problem plants, including many invasive species. These agile animals can work on areas such as steep hill-sides or very overgrown tracts that are difficult to manage using other means.

By grazing deep-rooted plants and then depositing manure, sheep and goats recycle nutrients from the subsoil to the topsoil, improving soil structure and fertility. They often are cheaper and more environmentally friendly

than chemical or mechanical means. In addition to controlling problem plants, they are also helpful in controlling insects such as the alfalfa weevil when used on croplands.

Sheep and goats reduce fire risk by eating potential fuels, and they are enjoyable to see on the landscape. However, they are not the best choice in all situations, and they will need to be used each season for several years to control many plants.

Challenges of Vegetation Management Services

- You must invest in portable electric fencing, chargers, livestock guardian dogs, water tanks, and a method for providing water.
- You need a way to transport animals to the site.
- You must check on the land and animals daily.
- You need labor and expertise to manage the project.
- You must find clients who will commit to the length of time needed to do an effective job.
- You need the right number of animals for certain jobs.
- You need to manage the animals when they aren't "on a job." You must have a place to keep them when they aren't working.
- You must manage breeding animals. When will your animals be bred? Where will they kid/lamb? When will you wean? Will animals be "working" while they have babies on them?

Advantages of Vegetation Management Services

- There are no feed costs when animals are grazing a client's land.
- You can gain additional income besides selling kids, lambs, or fiber.
- You do not need high-value grazing animals to provide this service.
- This eco-friendly service becomes part of your farm's marketing "story."

See tips for success on page 4.

Resources for Marketing Sheep and Goat Products

Vegetation Management

- **American Sheep Institute** offers many resources. See “Sheep in the Environment” and “Targeted Grazing.” www.sheepusa.org
- **Langston University** website provides great information especially pertinent to Oklahoma and central states. See the “Vegetation Management” chapter by Dr. Steve Hart — www.luresext.edu/goats/training/vegetation.html#veg — in the *Meat Goat Production Manual*. www.luresext.edu
- **Livestock for Landscapes** is dedicated to training animals to manage vegetation. The *Goats! For Firesafe Homes in Wildland Areas* CD includes information on marketing, writing contracts, a “goat calculator” to help you figure approximate costs, and a sample business plan. www.livestockforlandscapes.com
- **Maryland Small Ruminant Page** offers webinars and a wealth of other information. Go to “Forages,” then “Weeds,” then “Targeted Grazing.” www.sheepandgoat.com

- **Targeted Grazing Manual** provides extensive information from experienced providers, including how to

write a contract that will help both the grazer and the landowner. See especially chapters 16 and 17. www.cnr.uidaho.edu/rx-grazing/handbook.htm

- **Utah State University Cooperative Extension BEHAVE program** teaches animal behavior and how to use it to improve results in managing land. See *Saving Money and Improving Landscapes: The Economics of Using Animal Behavior*. www.behave.net

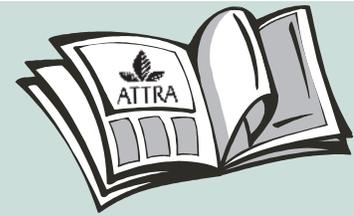
Marketing Fiber Products

- **Sheep Shearing Online Directory** lists contact information for professional sheep shearers in most states. http://172.47.218.74/client/motive/asi/Shearer_Directory
- **Fleece & Fiber Sourcebook** includes information about almost every sheep breed in the world, as well as goats, alpacas, llamas, vicunas, and more unusual fiber animals such as horses, bison, musk oxen, rabbits, and dogs. www.fleeceandfiber.com

Turning Wool Into a Cottage Industry by Paula Simmons is a classic guide to beginning a fiber business. The book covers a wealth of material from many farmers and entrepreneurs. Find it used at www.addall.com

New and Updated ATTRA Publications

- Extensión de Temporada para Horticultores SP035
- Guide for Organic Crop Producers IP225
- Guide for Organic Livestock Producers IP228
- Guide for Organic Processors IP421
- No-Till Case Study, Bauer Farm: Cover Crop Cocktails on Former CRP Land IP442
- No-Till Case Study, Brown’s Ranch: Improving Soil Health Improves the Bottom Line IP440
- No-Till Case Study, Miller Farm: Restoring Grazing Land with Cover Crops IP444
- No-Till Case Study, Richter Farm: Cover Crop Cocktails in a Forage-Based System IP437
- Organic Certification of Farms and Businesses Producing Agricultural Products IP222
- Small-Scale Sustainable Rabbit Production IP445
- Small-Scale Wind Energy on the Farm IP311
- Solar-Powered Livestock Watering Systems IP217
- Tools for Managing Internal Parasites in Small Ruminants: Pasture Management IP401
- Understanding Organic Pricing and Costs of Production IP441



ATTRA Resources for Marketing Sheep and Goat Products

The following ATTRA publications and resources include useful information for marketing sheep and goat products. These resources and many more can be found in the livestock and pasture section of ATTRA’s website, www.attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/livestock. Call 800-346-9140 for a printed copy. Prices vary and many resources are free.

See ATTRA’s new series of tips for marketing sheep and goat products on page 3.

- Dairy Goats: Sustainable Production IP258
- Dairy Sheep IP288
- Goats: Sustainable Production Overview IP248
- Illustrated Guide to Sheep and Goat Production (available in English, Spanish, or Hmong) IP330
- Managing Internal Parasites in Sheep and Goats IP293
- Meat Goats: Sustainable Production IP200
- Meat Plants: Improving Profitability in Small and Very Small Operations IP385
- Multispecies Grazing CT147
- Predator Control for Sustainable and Organic Livestock Production IP196
- Sheep: Sustainable and Organic Production IP102
- Small Ruminant Sustainability Checklist IP254
- Tools for Managing Internal Parasites in Small Ruminants: Animal Selection IP400
- Tools for Managing Internal Parasites in Small Ruminants: Copper Wire Particles IP317
- Tools for Managing Internal Parasites in Small Ruminants: Sericea Lespedeza IP316

Marketing Sheep and Goat Fiber

Sheep, Angora goats, and cashmere goats offer another “crop” in addition to meat. The natural fibers produced by these animals can be used in a variety of ways to add income to the sheep or goat enterprise. Natural fibers are a renewable resource — long lasting, durable, comfortable, and beautiful. Fiber-producing animals are crowd-pleasers. Participating in fairs and festivals can draw attention to your farm and increase sales of items.

Advantages of Marketing Fiber

- You have a locally grown, eco-friendly product.
- You can diversify products and market opportunities.
- Fiber is non-perishable—easy to haul, ship, and store.

Considerations in Marketing Fiber

- You must find or become a good shearer.
- You must locate or become a good spinner /fiber artist if you want to sell yarn or other products.
- Nutrition is vital: good fiber is from healthy animals.
- Choose animals for breeding that have high-quality fiber for the purpose intended.
- You must manage the environment to protect the quality of the fiber. Remove plants that produce burrs, for example, and use feeders that keep hay from being embedded in the fleece.
- Natural fibers must be kept dry, clean, and protected from moths.



Photo: Margo Hale, NCAT



Photo: Susan Schoenian
University of Maryland Extension

Tips for Marketing Fiber

- Learn about fiber and about what your customers will want, such as fineness, color, cleanliness, staple length.
- Skirt fleeces well, removing dirty locks from the edges.
- Market the fiber with energy and enthusiasm. Your animals have produced a locally grown, natural resource that will appeal to modern-day consumers who want eco-friendly fibers.
- Sell not only the wool and products, but also lessons in spinning, knitting and felting.

You can find potential customers in many places.

- Join spinning or knitting guilds to learn about people’s interests. Take classes at a yarn shop.
- Participate in fiber festivals and in local foods groups to meet people who value local products.
- Consider your state programs for locally grown produce and list your farm and products.
- Visit “natural baby” stores to offer natural fiber items for small children. Market blankets as baby or wedding gifts, or as gifts to college students in the school colors.
- Market wool socks to those who work outdoors, the elderly, and hikers or runners who value natural-fiber socks and hats.
- Contact groups involved in historical re-enactment. Socks, hats, and blankets will be in demand.
- Investigate state park gift shops to see if they would offer natural fiber products.

The articles in this issue are adapted from ATTRA’s recent series of *Tips for Marketing Sheep and Goat Products* by NCAT Agriculture Specialists Linda Coffey and Margo Hale.

- *Tips for Marketing Sheep and Goat Products: Dairy* IP396
- *Tips for Marketing Sheep and Goat Products: Live Animals* IP398

- *Tips for Marketing Sheep and Goat Products: Meat* IP393
- *Tips for Marketing Sheep and Goat Products: Vegetation Management Services* IP403

Forthcoming: *Tips for Marketing Sheep and Goat Products: Fiber*



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Tips for Providing Vegetation Management Services with Sheep and Goats

- **Learn all you can** about managing vegetation with sheep and goats. See Resources on page 2.
- Before you commit, **develop a budget** to see if a project will be economically feasible.
- **Start small and local** with pilot projects, working out kinks to reduce your risk.
- **Have clear goals.** What does the landowner want the land to look like? Look at the property together and agree on an initial assessment that includes a description of the vegetation. Take photos, and have the goal in writing.
- **List yourself as a service provider** through Livestock for Landscapes, sheepandgoat.com, and your local Extension office. Join sheep or goat associations in your area. List yourself as a provider on any relevant websites.
- **Don't take on more than you can reasonably do** or promise more than is feasible. Your good reputation is essential for success.
- Once you are comfortable with your work, **engage the press and raise public awareness** to build your business. See the Livestock for Landscapes CD for tips.
- **Build a website and create flyers** to promote your eco-friendly enterprise. Take before-and-after photos and use them to recruit new clients.

ATTRAnews

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ATTRAnews is the newsletter of the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service. The free newsletter is distributed throughout the United States to farmers, ranchers, Cooperative Extension agents, educators, and others interested in sustainable agriculture. ATTRA is funded through the USDA Rural Business-Cooperative Service and is a project of the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), a private, nonprofit organization that since 1976 has helped people by championing small-scale, local, and sustainable solutions to reduce poverty, promote healthy communities, and protect natural resources.



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