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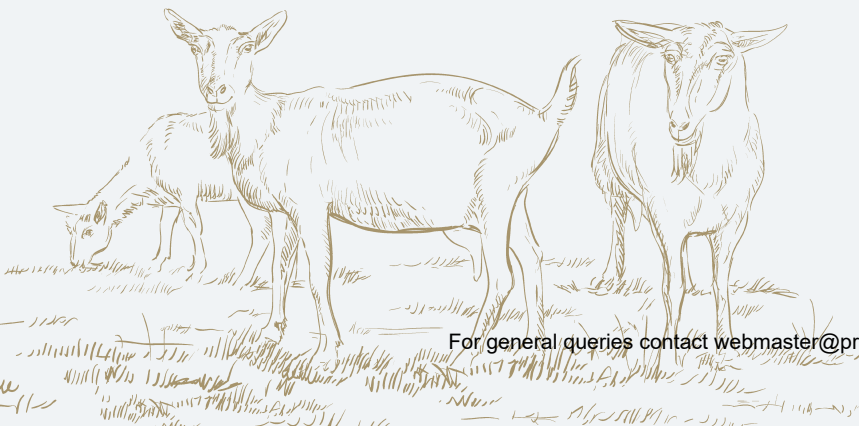
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Introducing the Goat

Although we cannot be entirely sure—and research continues to give new insights into their origins—it is generally believed that goats were domesticated in the Middle East roughly 10,000 years ago. Along with sheep, who were also domesticated at the same time and in the same locale, they were the first domestic livestock species.

Easy to tame, easy to feed, hardy, and docile, goats meant life to the ancients. These animals provided meat and milk; skins and pelts that could be used to fashion water carriers and body coverings, and sinew with which to sew them; bones and horns for tools; soft undercoats for spinning and felting; and hair for crafting tents. In addition, burning goat dung kept primitive shelters warm, and dung could also be used as a fertilizer to enrich the soil. As pack animals, goats carried loads and pulled travois and other forms of sled. They made fine trading goods for people on the move, and trade in turn helped distribute goats around the world. Later in Africa and the Middle East, wealth was reckoned in goats and maintaining huge herds was a major status symbol of the day. Bride prices and dowries were paid in goats, and goats provided sacrifices for the gods.

Even in our age of spit-and-polish show goats and high-producing dairy does, everyday goats provide life-giving milk and meat in developing countries, where no other livestock would thrive. Goats are the perfect livestock for marginal living situations.

Opposite: *Docile, intelligent, and easy to tame, goats have been a friend to humankind for thousands of years.*



Right: *Friendly, productive goats are often called “the poor man’s cow” because they thrive in places where larger, more feed-intensive dairy and meat species like cattle and water buffaloes usually fail.*



Goats are primarily browsers, not grazers, so they thrive on brush, leaves, and coarse plants that other species leave behind or can't digest. Goats can stand on their hind legs to browse low-hanging tree branches that are up to six or seven feet off the ground. They're strong climbers, too, so they can forage in steep places where sheep and cows won't venture. They can cover great distances looking for food, and will tolerate extremes in temperature and handle heat stress and prolonged water deprivation when they must. As Thomas Bewick observed in *A General History of Quadrupeds*, as far back as 1792, "The goat is an animal easily sustained, and is chiefly therefore the property of those who inhabit wild and uncultivated regions, where it finds an ample supply of food from spontaneous productions of nature, in situations inaccessible to other creatures."

All of these qualities make goats ideal livestock for the poor. They aren't expensive to buy, house, feed, or maintain. And having several goats provides more sales and trading opportunities than keeping a single large cow or water buffalo; several goats take up less space, too. Goats even reproduce without fuss, providing tasty kids for the larder.

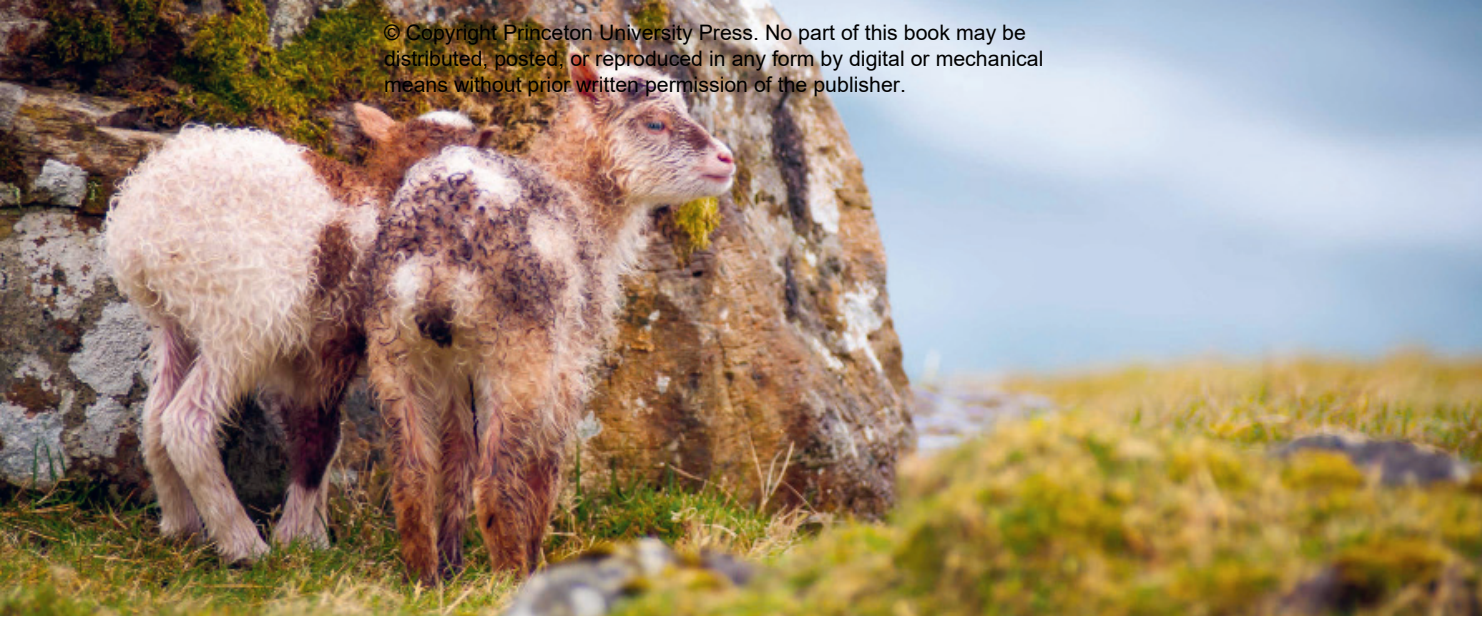
Goats are gentle, intelligent, and affectionate, but they are also independent, mischievous, determined, and frustrating. In this book we'll show you where goats came from, how they've interacted with human caretakers through the centuries, and what makes them tick. If you're ready to learn all things goat, read on.

Below left: *Yes, goats in trees! Goats are amazing climbers; they're descended from mountains goats after all. These agile goats are browsing argan tree fruit in Morocco.*



"GOAT" IN ENGLISH

The word "goat" comes from the Old English *gāt* (in turn, from the Proto-Germanic *gaito*), meaning a female goat. A male goat was a *bucca* or *gātbucca*, which evolved into "buck," the correct term until a shift to *he-goat* and *she-goat* occurred in the late twelfth century. "Nanny goat" originated in the eighteenth century, and "billy goat" in the mid-nineteenth century. "Doe" and "buck" then became popular in the mid-twentieth century.



ABOUT THIS BOOK

Our story of the goat begins in Chapter 1 as we take a look at the road goats have traveled through history, from prehistoric beast to man's four-legged helper. We consider true wild goats, among them *Capra aegagrus*, first domesticated in the Fertile Crescent around 10,000 years ago and ancestor to today's goats worldwide, and why it was relatively easy to bring him in from the wild. We also see how goats spread quickly around the globe in the company of Neolithic herders and, later, colonists, seafaring traders, and explorers, sometimes escaping their handlers and returning to the wild as feral goats.

Chapter 2 then addresses biology and anatomy. We survey goats' bones, their organs, their hooves, their splendid horns, and each of their five senses. We lightly touch on genetics, on dwarfism, and what makes some goats "faint." We also examine a wide array of colors and markings before taking a peek at the differences between the goat and its cousin, the sheep.

In Chapter 3 we delve into goat society and behavior, and what makes goats tick. This chapter explains how they interact with one another and establish a hierarchy, and why this is important to goats. We consider courtship and the goat—when and how they breed, and how they choose their mates. We look at how their early lives unfold and how kids play and mature. We also consider vocalizations—why goats call and what it means. Are goats smart? They are, and we'll show you why we know it's so.

In Chapter 4 we look at properly caring for goats: trimming their hooves, attending them as they give birth, and addressing common health issues. We consider the hows and whys of handling and training them, and how to troubleshoot behavior quirks.

Above: *Feral goats like these kids descend from domestic goats gone wild. Feral goats still exist and thrive in parts of Britain, the US, New Zealand, and Australia.*



We round things out in Chapter 5 by observing how goats and humans interact: milk goats, meat goats, fiber goats, goats for vegetation control, even packgoats that carry your gear when you go camping. We learn that goats were once widely used as cart and carriage goats, and how they still continue to perform this function today. Along the way we'll consider the goats that used to pose with children in vintage photos, and hauled the wagons of eccentric "goat men" in the early twentieth century. Goats abound in world myth, too, and we'll take a peek at some of them: the goats who pulled Thor's chariot, the Yule goat of Scandinavia, and many goat deities and fairies from around the world. We'll consider goats raised to become religious sacrifices, past and present, and military mascots; we'll even explore the use of goatskins to make musical instruments, from drums to bagpipes, horns, stringed instruments, and beyond. This chapter concludes with a look at goats in popular culture.

Finally, Chapter 6 takes the form of a breed directory at the end of the book, introducing a gallery of 48 glorious goat breeds from around the world, with key facts and figures on each one. Read on and meet the wondrous goat—you may never look at these animals in the same way again.

Above: Goats were once used to pack goods in mountainous areas like Mongolia and Nepal. Now they pack camping gear for walkers and backwoods adventurers in North America and Europe.

10 FACTS ABOUT GOATS

1. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the country with the largest goat population is China, followed by Pakistan, and then Nigeria.
2. India is the world's largest producer of goat milk, followed by Bangladesh, and then France. Most of India's and Bangladesh's production is used for home consumption, while roughly 90 percent of France's milk is used for crafting cheese.
3. Goat meat is eaten throughout the world, and kid is a special delicacy. In the Caribbean and some parts of Asia, including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal, English speakers call it "mutton," whereas in the UK, US, and Australia, mutton refers to the meat of adult sheep.
4. Of 570 goat breeds found worldwide, only 69 are specialized dairy breeds. And 221 breeds originated in Europe and the Caucasus, followed by Asia with 183, and Africa with 96. North America has the fewest with 6.
5. The life expectancy for a well-cared-for goat is around 12 to 15 years of age. According to the Guinness World Records, the oldest known was an English doe named McGinty that lived to 22 years and 5 months.
6. Cartoons and folklore notwithstanding, goats don't eat tin cans, garbage, or clothing. While they can and often do subsist on meager fare, goats are in fact fastidious eaters—for instance, they won't eat feed that is soiled with feces or has fallen on the ground—when provided with a well-balanced diet.
7. Unlike cartoon "billy goats," unaltered male goats rarely rush people when their backs are turned and bash them with their horns. Aggressive goats are more likely to face whomever they're threatening; they will lower their heads, with horns jutting forward, or they will rear on their hind legs and swoop down toward the person they're intimidating. Even this is rare because, unless they've been mistreated, most male goats are as friendly as females and wethered (castrated) males.
8. Goats are curious, sociable, and intelligent. According to a study carried out by researchers at London's Queen Mary University in the UK, they are able to communicate and interact with humans to the same degree as domestic dogs. (For more on these findings, see Chapter 3.)
9. Most goats are born with horn buds that, unless growth is artificially inhibited (as described in Chapter 3), develop into horns. The longest horns on a living goat in 2018, according to Guinness World Records, belonged to Rasputin, a Valais Blackneck buck from Austria, whose horns measured an impressive 55 in. (140 cm) from tip to tip.
10. Despite popular thought, goats aren't stinky. The only smelly goats are bucks in rut (explained further in Chapter 3). During breeding season, glands near their horns secrete strong-scented, greasy musk, and they squirt thin streams of urine onto themselves. Does and wethers don't do this, so unless they're in close contact with a rutting buck, goats kept in clean surroundings don't stink.



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