

Book review

Raising Goats for Milk and Meat, 2008

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Heifer International, 1 World Avenue, Little Rock, Arkansas 72202, USA

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It is a pleasure to review this new publication by Heifer International in Little Rock, Arkansas, USA. This training manual is a second revised edition of the earlier publication in 1984. It is organised into 10 chapters and includes introduction to goat care and management; husbandry systems, shelters, feeders and equipment; nutrition and feeding; forage production, pastures and environmental management; reproduction; kidding; milking the doe; health care for young goats; people, economics and marketing; and humane transportation and slaughter of goats. There is in addition, a useful glossary of terms, list of references, and six Appendices: goat breeds, record sheets, budgeting, conversion table, goat and goat related organisations, and recipes. The revised edition features learning guides at the beginning of each chapter, and recent information on health, marketing, raising meat goats and care for the land. It is available free of charge for use in development projects and may be purchased by individuals for \$20.00, plus shipping and handling.

The training manual is targeted at beginners and those who wish to enter goat farming. It is primarily concerned with the dissemination of basic information and aids for the trainer, farmers and practitioners on the care and management of goats. Each chapter is in two parts: The Learning Guide and The Lesson. Each chapter concludes with an inspiring success story of the impact of rearing goats on the livelihoods of the poor.

The presentation of the textual material is simple, user friendly with a practical orientation, and is backed by excellent illustrations, photographs and appropriate boxes. The manual addresses both goat milk and meat, and therefore provides for potential wider use in both developed and developing countries. One important aspect that was not addressed, but would have increased the attraction for goat farming concerns data on the economics of goat milk and meat production in Chapter 9 from sample locations. More information could also have been included on the processing of goat milk and meat. It would also have been useful to have had a subject index.

The important contribution of this manual to information dissemination and increased community-based development capacity needs to be seen in the broader context of the mission goals and achievements of Heifer International. Its mission to ending world hunger and caring for mother earth, through “passing the gift“ is also made more prominent with goats. Some 4000-7000 goats are distributed annually in over 50 countries. A few years ago, the millionth animal distributed in China— which was a goat – was in Sichuan Province. I was privileged to attend this ceremony. Rearing goats consistently provides for food security and survival, improved and sustainable livelihoods, nutritional and financial security for the poor in developing countries. Continuing investments and donor support for Heifer International’s mission, with its global outreach to 128 countries is therefore very significant.

Many books are currently available on goats farming. However, very few among these are a practical training manual, and this publication fills that gap admirably. The authors and the core group in Heifer International are congratulated for making the publication available. The manual is highly

recommended to farmers, practitioners, village and municipality leaders, teachers and extension personnel concerned with improved goat husbandry and expanded production.

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