

Shelters for Goats

OR

Now That You've Got Your Goat, Where Do You Put It?



**Old garage with loafing shed
A perfect goat barn!**

Shelter for goats can be as simple or complex as you wish. They don't need fancy digs. Those old outbuildings can be adapted at little or no cost. The main concerns are to keep your goats dry and give them a place out of the wind in the winter. Good ventilation is needed in the summer. As in most things, simple is usually best.

In some places, such as parts of Texas, it is possible to get by without any shelter. However, in most areas, some shelter will be necessary.

Like many, we started with just a few goats—three to be exact. Their home was a three-sided building which had been originally intended for horses. The shed was 16' X 20' and had 16' ceiling. Our three cashmere goats shared the barn with two sheep, three wandering chickens who refused to be contained in the chicken yard next door and a potbellied pig named Mittens. We divided the shed into two sections, one half for the animals and the other half for the hay, feed and farm

equipment.

We remodeled constantly to keep up with the critters demands and needs. It is amazing what can be done with a little imagination, some plywood and 2 X 4's.

The biggest problem was that the building had been constructed with the open side facing north. Nice in the summer, but very drafty in the winter.

Our next shelter was an old sway-backed garage which we hastily cleaned out to accommodate the purchase of a small herd of goats. We sectioned off one end (using old salvaged wooden gates) for feed and hay storage, electric fence generator and tools.

For shearing, we put down a sheet of plywood in the tool side of the shed.

While this shelter wasn't very wind proof, we improved it somewhat by patching the worst places with cheap utility-grade lumber when-

ever we thought there might be a draft problem during kidding and after shearing. Does with newborns were put in the adjoining loafing shed, which was sectioned off into cubicles using and reusing old plywood and 2 X 4's.

These shelters got us through our first couple of winters.

One of the best (and easiest) shelters was based on a design by Tom Dooling at BOCC I. The plan is for a three-sided shed, and the dimensions are based on the most economical use of 4 X 8' sheets of plywood. The floor is straw and, in our case, has drainage around it for all our rain (over five feet in 1996). The open side of the shed can be partially covered by additional plywood in extreme conditions.

Our roof is comprised of sheets of corrugated fiberglass, found at any building supply or lumber yard. Tom suggested tin for roofing, which we will use on our next building as we found the fiberglass a little wimpy.

We housed 12 large adult goats in this building over the winter. Per Tom, this shelter can accommodate 30+ goats. Capacity would be affected by climate and goat size.

As Tom suggested, and we ignored, much to our regret, putting the shed on skids so it can be moved, would be helpful.

This year, we finally built a real barn. It was planned as a modified version of the barn outlined in Sue Drummond's book "Raising Angoras the Northern Way." Our end

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result is somewhat different than her original design.

The barn is a rectangle, with dimensions of 40' X 90', 12' high, except that one end is 18' high, to allow access to and storage of hay and straw. With the exception of the hay end, we figured 12' was high enough eves for goats, as outside eaves are 6' high—almost high enough that Paul won't bump his head. Also, the lower the ceiling, the warmer the barn, as it holds the heat produced by the goats closer to their level.

Inside the barn, we built separate pens for does of two different age groups and individual pens for kidding and an occasional lucky buck during the breeding season. The area set aside for shearing, hoof trimming, storage and work area will have a concrete floor. Elsewhere on the floor, we have 6" of crushed rock covered with clean straw to avoid the sea of mud we experience in a wet Oregon winter.

We have visited many farms and ranches and have seen a wide va-

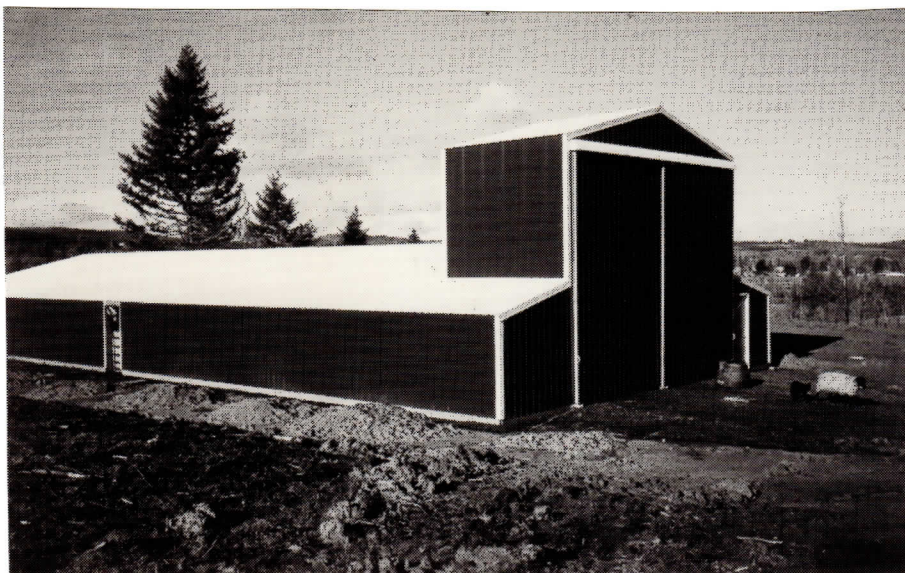
riety of shelters for goats. There is no single "right" way.

For the goats themselves, the simple three-sided shed works well, even in Oregon (wet) and Montana (cold) winters. Our new barn is as much for our comfort and convenience as the goats. It is intended mostly for the does, and will (hopefully) be ample space for at least a hundred or more goats.

For inside pens, we used posts, plywood and 2 X 4's. This allows us to arrange and rearrange the pen configurations as needed.

The old garage-barn is still used by our breeding bucks, and the loafing shed is home to our "future" breeding bucks (breeding bucks in training?). The shed or "buck house" (complete with graffiti) is also being used, lately as a "honeymoon suite" during breeding season and for wethers.

The three-sided shelter designed by Tom Dooling is outlined on page 15. This shelter is a great way to start if you are starting from scratch and can be easily adapted to any climate. We plan on building at least two more this year.



**The ultimate goat barn (for us)
Low height pole building with high "hay end"**

Goat Statistics

Body Temperature: 102.5°F - 104° F

Pulse/heart rate: 60 to 80 beats per minute

Respiration rate: 15 to 30 breaths per minute

Puberty: 4 to 12 months

Estrus ("heat") cycle: 18 to 23 days

Length of each "heat": 12 to 36 hours

Gestation (length of pregnancy): 150 days

Breeding season: Pygmy goats may be bred any time of the year. Dairy (and cashmere) goats usually go into heat between August and January in the Northern Hemisphere.

Weight: An adult pygmy goat weighs between 50 and 75 pounds. An adult dairy goat doe weighs between 125 and 200 pounds. An adult dairy goat buck weighs between 200 and 300 pounds.

A Healthy Goat

Eyes clear and bright. Tearing or cloudy eyes could mean a pinkeye infection.

Coat smooth and shiny. A dull coat could indicate parasites. Fluffed up coat means the goat is not feeling well (or has a GOOD coat of cashmere!)

Appetite good. However, it is normal for a doe in labor to refuse to eat.

Attitude alert. Hunched back and droopy tail mean something is wrong.

Information compliments of Irvine Mesa Charros 4-H Club University of California, Irvine from their web page: <http://www.ics.uci.edu/~pazzani/4H/InfodirtRoad.html>