



Topic 10. Goats

Goats are commonly kept in small and backyard operations and are often managed in flexible housing and pasture systems. From a biosecurity perspective, goat management emphasizes understanding how movement, diet, environment, and daily handling can influence disease pathways over time.

Animal movement is a key consideration. Goats may be introduced from outside sources, moved between pens or pastures, transported for breeding or sale, or housed temporarily in shared facilities. Each movement creates potential for indirect exposure through contact with other animals, people, equipment, or environments. Biosecurity education focuses on recognizing when these movements occur and how they fit into the overall health context of the herd.

Environmental interfaces also play an important role. Goats frequently interact with pasture edges, wooded areas, fencing, and shelter structures, which may also be used by wildlife or pests. Cervids, birds, and small mammals may pass through goat areas without direct interaction but still contribute to background exposure risk. Educational approaches emphasize awareness of these interfaces rather than attempting to fully control them.

Diet and feeding practices are particularly relevant for goats and are considered separately from other small ruminants. Goats have species-specific nutritional requirements and tolerances, and feed handling and storage practices can influence both health and biosecurity. Understanding how feed is sourced, stored, and distributed supports broader awareness of how dietary factors intersect with animal health. For this reason, goat feeding considerations are addressed independently from sheep, which have different nutritional sensitivities.

Health monitoring is an important component of goat biosecurity. Close observation of behavior, appetite, posture, movement, and social interaction can help establish what is normal for a herd. In small operations, familiarity with individual animals often allows caretakers to notice subtle changes early. Linking observations with basic records can provide additional context when evaluating patterns over time.

In the United States, goats are included in the USDA Scrapie Eradication Program, which is a national effort to monitor and reduce the occurrence of scrapie in small ruminants. From an educational perspective, scrapie monitoring highlights the importance of animal identification, movement awareness, and recordkeeping at the herd level. Understanding that goats are part of a broader disease monitoring framework helps place identification and health records in context, without focusing on specific regulatory requirements.



Biosecurity education for goats emphasizes situational awareness rather than standardized protocols. Goat operations vary widely in purpose, scale, and management style. Educational materials therefore focus on understanding how movement, environment, diet, and observation interact, supporting informed evaluation of risk within the realities of goat husbandry.

References

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info@backyardbiosecurity.org