

Introduction

Goats may be kept for milk, meat, or fiber (or a combination thereof). Both Angora and Cashmere goats are raised for fiber, but differ in both fiber qualities and methods of fiber harvest. Angora goats produce mohair. Fiber from non-Angora goats is Cashmere. Note that rabbits, not Angora goats, produce Angora fiber.

Best Management Practices

Angora Goats

Angora goats produce mohair. Most animals produce a relatively coarse outer coat and a finer undercoat. The overcoat will shed rain and the undercoat will provide insulation. Undercoats generally grow in for winter warmth and are shed in the spring. The undercoat provides finer quality fibers. The two types of fiber must be separated at some point in the processing of the fleece. The undercoat dominates, so that relatively little coarse hair will be included in a fleece. However, consideration of the outer, coarser, guard hairs must be included in the overall shearing plan for Angoras. To facilitate fiber sorting, animals with less outer hair may be shorn separately from those with more outer “guard” hair.

Shearing Angora Goats

1. Unlike sheep, Angora goats are generally sheared twice a year, once in spring before kidding, and once in fall prior to the breeding season. Exact time of shearing will depend on climate and availability of shelter for shorn animals.
2. Undesirable fibers must be separated from the mohair to obtain a high quality product. These are kemp (hollow, short, coarse (itchy) fibers), and medulated fibers which are also coarser than mohair and are hollow or partially hollow. The amount of kemp and medulated fiber varies by individual and age of animal. Young goats tend to have least kemp and older males the most. It is recommended to shear animals with the highest quality fleece first so bundles contain consistent quality fleece.
3. The Texas A&M University website <http://sanangelo.tamu.edu/Angora/> provides detailed instructions for shearing Angora goats.

General Shearing tips

1. A clean animal is much easier to shear than is a dirty animal.
2. It is essential that the goat be dry for shearing.
3. Clipping is easier than shearing, especially for a novice.
4. Avoid cutting the same area twice as maximizing fiber length results in higher quality yarn.

Finding a Shearer

The fiber goat business in Massachusetts is not large and is confined to relatively small herds. If not doing your own shearing, try looking for a sheep shearer (see below).

Note: Mohair is produced by Angora goats.

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Resources

Drummond, Susan. 2005. Angora Goats the Northern Way 5th edition.

Massachusetts 4-H at www.mass4h.org has a goat program. There is also a goat camp held at the Cummington Fairgrounds in Cummington, MA. A contact for Massachusetts 4H information is: Carrie Chickering-Sears Director of Community Education in Animal Agriculture University of Massachusetts Amherst Veterinary & Animal Science Dept. 111 North Maple Street Hadley, MA 01035 Phone: 413-549-3257 ccsears@umext.umass.edu

More general information about raising goats may be found in the Mass Agriculture in the Classroom winter 2006 newsletter

at: <http://www.umass.edu/umext/mac/Newsletters/Winter%202006.htm>

Texas A&M University has detailed instructions for shearing Angora goats, as well as information on raising goats. <http://sanangelo.tamu.edu/Angora/>

The Massachusetts Sheep and Woolcraft Fair information may be found at www.masheepwool.org. The fair features not only sheep, but other fiber-bearers such as goats and is held at the Cummington Fairgrounds in Cummington, MA.

University of California, Davis Small Farm Center One Shields Ave Davis, CA 95616-8699 For Angora goats: <http://www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/pubs/brochures/Angora.html> For Cashmere goats: <http://www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/pubs/brochures/Cashmeregoats.html>

www.sheepusa.org has listings of sheep, alpaca, and llama shearers. Some of these may shear goats as well. Listings are by state, so check surrounding states if you do not come up with someone local.

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