

Feeding pet sheep and goats

and others that aren't bred

Some people keep sheep and/or goats as pets or companion animals. Some keep wethers for fiber production or simply don't breed their fiber-producing sheep/goats. Some production animals are allowed to "retire" on the farm. So, what does this mean for nutrition, since nutrient requirements are based mostly on production: gestation, lactation, and growth?



If a sheep/goat is not growing, breeding, gestating, lactating, or doing some kind of "work," its nutritional requirements are for **MAINTENANCE** only; in other words, only the amount of feed necessary to maintain normal healthy bodily function.



The goal of a maintenance diet is to **MAINTAIN** body weight and condition. Animals should not be too thin or too fat. You may need to restrict grazing time to keep some sheep/goats from getting too fat.



For maintenance, sheep/goats need to consume 1.5 to 3% of their body weight in feed. That's 2-4 lbs. of hay (per day) for a 130-lb. animal. The ration only needs to be about 54% TDN (energy) and 7% CP (protein). If forage quality is low, the protein percentage will need to be higher.

Most adult sheep/goats can meet their protein and energy requirements with **PASTURE OR HAY ALONE**. Grain feeding is not usually necessary. However, there are a few things that can increase nutritional requirements above maintenance. These include shearing, activity, weather, disease, and age.



To prevent **URINARY CALCULI** in males, especially wethers, the ratio of calcium to phosphorus in the (whole) diet should be at least 2:1. No or minimal grain should be fed. Too much calcium can also be problematic for males. Don't feed them legume (like alfalfa) hay.

It goes without saying that sheep/goats should always have access to clean fresh water. They should also be offered species-specific minerals.



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