

SHEEP & GOATS VS. CATTLE



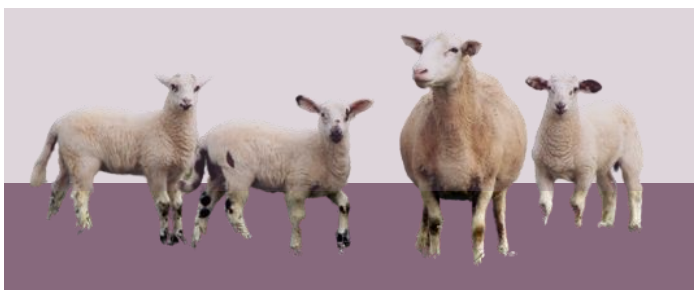
As small ruminants, sheep/goats share many characteristics with cattle. However, there are many differences, and there are pros and cons to raising each. At the same time, sheep, goat, and cattle enterprises can be complementary.



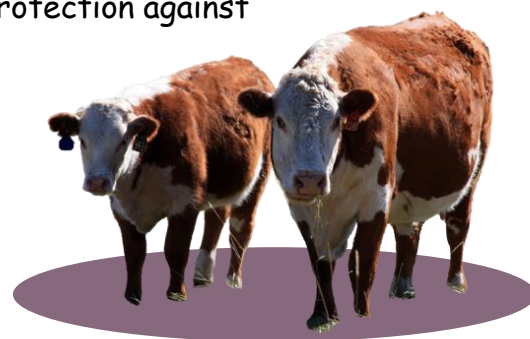
Multispecies grazing can improve pasture utilization and reduce undesirable plant populations. Sheep, goats, and cattle have complementary foraging behavior. They do not compete directly with each other. Goats prefer browse and graze mainly at head height and above. Sheep typically graze with their heads down. They often choose forbs over grass. Cattle are grass eaters. Research has shown that you can add one ewe (or doe) per cow without reducing stocking rates. Sheep/goats and cattle generally do not share the same parasites. If you can get the animals to bond, the cattle may offer some protection against predators.



Sheep and goats are more multi-purpose animals. They produce meat, milk, fiber, and skins. No animal is better at controlling unwanted vegetation than goats. Sheep are ideal for grazing under solar panels. Sheep and goats are useful research models. Sheep blood is preferred for culturing.



Profit potential is greater with sheep and goats due to their superior reproductive efficiencies: earlier puberty, shorter gestation period, and multiple births. Lambs/kids are sold at younger ages. The return on investment is quicker and ewes/does usually wean a higher percentage of their body weight.



Beef cattle have several advantages over small ruminants.

Fencing requirements are less. Predator risk is significantly less. Cattle are less susceptible to parasites and hoof problems. There is less labor associated with raising cattle. The infrastructure for beef production is superior. Beef is a staple in the American diet.