RAM & BUCK MANAGEMENT

Proper management of rams/bucks is essential to successful sheep/goat breeding and farming. Rams/bucks need proper nutrition and good care year-round, not just during the breeding season. Rams/bucks represent half the genetics in the flock/herd; you don't get lambs or kids without them.

Rams/bucks require proper nutrition to maintain their health, body condition, and reproductive performance. They (especially young ones) may need extra feed during the breeding season to keep them from losing too much weight.

Ram/bucks should be observed for lameness and have their hooves trimmed as needed (but not overzealously) It is recommended that rams/bucks with excessive or abnormal hoof growth be culled. If you don't cull those that get foot rot (or other hoof disease) you should at least cull the ones that fail to respond to treatment and/or get reinfected.

Rams/bucks should be regularly monitored for signs of gastro-intestinal parasitism and dewormed as needed. Rams/bucks that require frequent deworming should be culled. If fecal egg counts are done, rams/bucks that are heavy egg shedders should not be used for breeding.

Rams/bucks need a secure "escape-proof" place to be when they are not with females during the breeding season. This can be a pen, drylot, or pasture. Many farmers build special housing for their rams/bucks. Ideally, males are not kept alone; they have a buddy for companionship. You need to be careful when putting unfamiliar intact males together. Put them in a small pen (where they cannot charge) until they stop fighting

Annual breeding soundness exams (BSE) are advised to ensure males are fertile and capable of breeding. A BSE includes a physical exam and semen test (ideally). Since libido testing is uncommon, it is important to monitor breeding activity, especially in single-sire situations. A marking harness or rattle paint can be used for this purpose.

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For more information, go to sheep101.info/201/ or sheepandgoat.com.