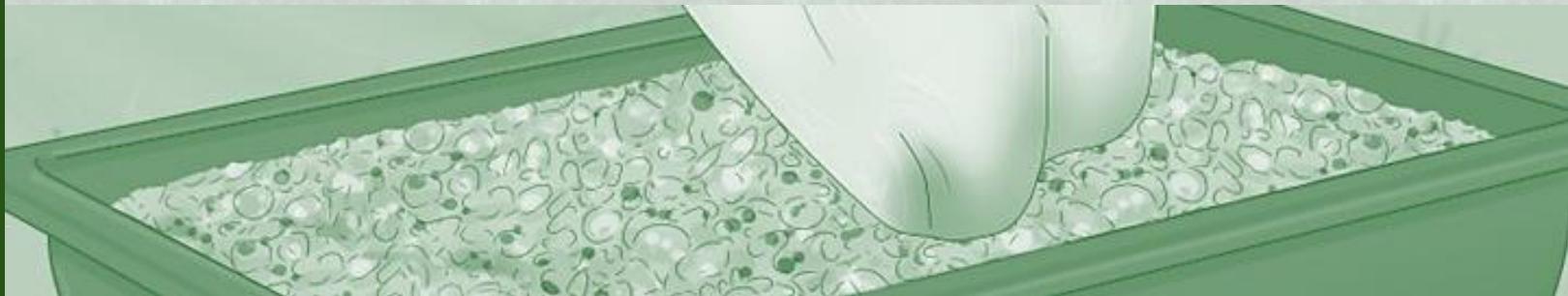


FEEDING GRAIN

to sheep and goats



Grain feeding is sometimes a controversial subject among small ruminant producers. Some producers feed a lot of grain to their sheep/goats, while others feed little or none. The decision to feed grain varies by farm/ranch and should be based on meeting the nutritional requirements of the animals, along with farm economics.

Grain is the seeds of grasses and leguminous plants.



REASONS TO FEED GRAIN

- To meet increased nutritional requirements of ewes/does during late gestation and lactation.
- Flush to improve birthing rates.
- Creep feed to increase lamb/kid gains and facilitate early weaning.
- Improve parasite resistance/resilience.
- During drought or other emergencies.
- Because of poor quality forage.
- To stretch pasture resource.
- For economic reasons; cheaper than hay.
- Marketing: improve grade and yield.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR FEEDING GRAIN TO SMALL RUMINANTS

- When adding grain to the diet, introduce it slowly and increase it incrementally.
- Never change the diet abruptly; rumen microbes need time to adjust
- Don't overfeed grain; never feed too much grain at one time.
- Always include a minimum amount of long stem forage (effective fiber) in the diet.
- Considering feeding grain or other supplements in the middle of the day, so you don't disrupt normal grazing behavior.
- Feed whole grains after the pre-ruminant period; don't feed too finely ground rations.
- Balance diets for calcium and phosphorus. Ratio should be $\geq 2:1$ for male animals.
- Provide plenty of feeder space to accommodate uniform consumption of grain.
- Vaccinate for overeating disease (*Clostridium perfringens* type D).