

Sheep and Goat SENSES

We use our senses to navigate our environment. The five senses are sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Sheep and goat senses differ considerably from humans, both in range and sensitivity, and are essential to their survival. Understanding goat and sheep senses makes for easier handling and husbandry.

HEARING

Sheep/goats have very sensitive hearing. They can hear a wider range and much higher pitches than people. They usually swivel their heads in the direction of the sound. They are frightened by loud noises.



SIGHT

Sheep/goat eyes are set on the side of the head. Along with their large rectangular pupils, this gives them amazing peripheral vision (up to 320 degrees), allowing them to see behind themselves without turning their heads. In contrast, their depth of perception is poor. They are often unable to see what is directly in front of their noses. Sheep/goats have good night vision and are able to perceive most colors though not the full spectrum like people. Goats have better vision than sheep.

SMELL

Sheep/goats have a keen sense of smell, superior to humans. Their sense of smell helps them detect predators, locate water, and distinguish between different kinds of food. Smell helps males locate females in heat and females recognize their offspring.



TASTE

Like people, sheep/goats use their taste to determine what foods they like and which they don't. They have some ability to distinguish poisonous plants from non-poisonous and to self-medicate.



TOUCH

Touch is important to all animals, especially dams and their offspring. Lambs/kids seek bodily contact with their dams. Milk let-down is a touch response. Groups of animals that have body contact are generally calmer.