

THE BENEFITS OF CASHMERE GOATS IN YOUR FARM SYSTEM

As part of our commitment to growing the Cashmere industry, we'll work alongside you to help build your flock and fibre quality while supporting you to reap the other farm management benefits of running an integrated farming system.

Experienced farmers we have spoken with about goats have been reinforcing the benefits they see from integrating goats into their farm systems.

What they say:

- Goats complement sheep and beef farming systems.
- Goats farmed for cashmere diversify their farming businesses.

For those who are new to goats and considering the advantages they may bring to their farming business and their unique farm system, we have collated three key farm system benefits and some of the science behind what experienced farmers are seeing.

WHAT FARMERS SEE:

1. Goats are great for pasture quality as farmers see a lift in the clover content of pastures.

The grazing of grass/white clover swards by goats compared with sheep in the first half of the grazing season results in higher clover content, which in turn results in higher herbage intakes and liveweight gains in weaned lambs when they subsequently graze these swards.¹

The integration of goats into grazing systems based on grass/white clover swards can be used to enhance clover growth, improve sheep performance, and increase output per hectare.²

Integrating goats with other livestock improves the utilisation of available plant resources, as goats consume vegetation components not considered desirable in the system. This includes weeds rejected by other livestock, also portions of pasture that are known to have lower nutritional value, such as grass seed heads and stems. Goats mobilise the resources stored in these unconsumed plants – lifting efficiency.

2. Goats help other classes of stock perform by improving feed quality.

Goat grazing (with cattle or alone) results in significantly less seed head components compared to cattle only, which minimises the need for ‘topping’.

Of the time goats spent feeding on grasses in spring and summer, more than half (58%) was spent grazing seed heads. Seed heads were always the first component to be selected when goats entered a new paddock, which was observed over different experiments.³

3. Goats are great for weed control – saving money and lowering chemical use.

Goat integration for weed control cuts herbicide and weed control costs.

Goats control weeds by:

- Preferentially grazing the weed and so placing it at a disadvantage.

- Eating seed heads, preventing the weed from flowering and dispersing seed.
- Ring barking or structurally weakening some shrub species.
- Historic case studies on Southern North Island hill country showed a net advantage from running goats as a form of weed control of \$8.19/su.⁴

Research and observation in New Zealand have identified many common weeds grazed by goats. These include:

- blackberry
- sweet brier
- gorse
- thistles
- manuka
- kanuka
- bracken fern
- tauhinu
- barberry
- ragwort
- rushes
- sedge
- tutu

Goats are particularly effective at controlling gorse:

- Goats when grazed with sheep show complementary diet selection in their grazing habits – with studies suggesting that sheep and goats farmed together control gorse, increase total animal product per unit area, and increase the amount of white clover available to sheep.

For more information on New Zealand Cashmere, please contact one of our representatives.

Let's bring New Zealand Cashmere to the world.

¹ Clark et al., NZ Grasslands, 1984. Pasture composition under mixed sheep and goat grazing on hill country <https://www.nzgjjournal.org.nz/index.php/ProNZGA/article/view/1665>

² M. del POZO, I. A. WRIGHT, T. K. WHYTE AND P. M. COLGROVE (1996). Effects of grazing by sheep or goats on sward composition in ryegrass/white clover pasture and on subsequent performance of weaned lambs. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2494.1996.tb02048.x>

³ DA Clarke, MG Lambert, MP Rolston, N Dymock (1982). Diet selection by goats and sheep on hill country. <http://www.nzsap.org/system/files/proceedings/1982/ab82044.pdf>

⁴ Daniels, N. (1966). The profitability of goats used for weed control on southern North Island hill country: a case study report prepared for the Goat Meat Industry Council and the Meat Research and Development Council.