

Draft Standards and Guidelines for Goats

Submission from the
Australian Veterinary Association



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The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) is the national organisation representing veterinarians in Australia. Our 8500 members come from all fields within the veterinary profession. Clinical practitioners work with companion animals, horses, livestock and wildlife. Government veterinarians work with our animal health, public health and quarantine systems while other members work in industry for pharmaceutical and other commercial enterprises. We have members who work in research and teaching in a range of scientific disciplines. Veterinary students are also members of the Association.

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Standards and Guidelines for Goats. AVA members who have particular expertise in goats and goat welfare have contributed the following comments for your consideration.

Section 2 – Feed and water

Suggest that both quantity and quality of feed and water is important, so re-wording to be more specific about this is recommended, thus:

Objective: Goats have access to appropriate *quantity and quality* of food and water

S2.1 - A person in charge must ensure goats have reasonable access to *an appropriate quantity and quality* of food and water

Section 3 – Risk management

G3.13 - Diseased goats should be separated from non affected goats and not reintroduced until either advice is received from a veterinarian or specific treatment allows the condition to resolve

G3.21 – Carcasses should be disposed of in situ in suspected Anthrax cases

Section 5 – Handling and husbandry

S5.2(5) – Recommend addition of horns to this standard

S5.6 - There are welfare issues with the use of electric prodders on goats. There should not be situations where their use is necessary on dairy goats, and so this should be a restriction. Use in meat goats poses both welfare and production issues due to risk of bruising and carcass damage. It is generally accepted that electric prodders should not be used on meat goats.

Use of electric prodders can elicit panic or flight responses which increase the risk of smothering if used in a restricted area such as a race or truck. Particularly with goats unused to handling (rangelands or ferals).

Any need to use a prodder in this species should be the exceptions rather than the norm. This should be specifically identified rather than leaving use open with restrictions. In the exceptional

circumstances when prodders are allowed, the type of prodder and the competence of the user must be specified.

S5.7 – This would be better worded to require that a person in charge actively allows goats an opportunity off the tether in order to exercise each day. Currently the standard requires only that goats 'are able to' exercise, which may be interpreted by some as being able to walk around whilst still tethered.

G5.8 - Tails should not be used to move goats at all – currently the guideline only requires that tails not be twisted.

G 5.12 – It may be necessary to individually pen a goat for quarantine purposes in the event of infectious disease. In this case, the goat should be able to see and hear other goats.

G 5.17 – The requirement to inspect tethered goats at least once daily is inconsistent with G5.18 which recommends constant supervision of tethered goats. As tethered goats are extremely vulnerable to attack, suggest deleting the once daily requirement in G 5.17 and replacing with the need to provide constant supervision.

G 5.22 – *Temporary or permanent purpose-built* yards should be used where appropriate for husbandry procedures

G5.24 - There are welfare concerns with dipping of goats. Goats try to avoid getting their heads wet and may struggle excessively. Spraying is a much better alternative from an animal welfare perspective.

G5.28 – Manufacturers' *and/or your veterinarian's* instructions should be followed for husbandry procedures for goats etc

G5.33 – Need to clarify that this is a requirement for *twice-yearly shearing* not biannual shearing. Some long-fleece breeds such as Angoras should be shorn at least every 8 months

Section 6 – Castration and dehorning

S6.2 – It is recommended that the age be brought down to 2 months, after which pain relief must be used.

S6.3 – It is recommended that pain relief be required from 6 weeks of age as dehorning is extremely painful in goats. As best practice is to disbud kids well before this age, using hot iron cautery, a requirement for analgesia for any procedure performed after 6 weeks of age should not be onerous for industry to achieve.

G6.15 – Support castration as young as possible and before 8 weeks of age. There are some recommendations for delaying castration of pet goats until the male reproductive tract is better developed to prevent urinary calculi problems. In these cases surgical castration must be performed by a veterinarian with appropriate anesthesia and analgesia.

G 6.17 – See comment on S6.2, above.

G6.20 – Recommend that age is specified as being best before 7-10 days

G6.22 – Add that scoop dehorning should not be performed.

General note on painful husbandry procedures: Ideally, pain relief should be used at any age for castration and disbudding/ dehorning or other painful procedures, even in very young animals, and this should be reflected in the guidelines (best practice). As more pain relief products become available, it is hoped that their use at all ages will be adopted as industry best practice.

Section 7 – Breeding management

S7.3 - A person must be a veterinarian, or operating under *direct* veterinary supervision, to perform surgical embryo transfer and laparoscopic insemination of goats. *Appropriate anesthesia or sedation, and analgesia must be provided.*

G7.12 Hand reared kids should be given suitable liquid feeds *and allowed access to creep feed, containing forage and energy supplements*, until the rumen has developed sufficiently to allow it to use solids as the sole feed source

G7.15 – Add that electro-ejaculation should only be performed under direct veterinary supervision

Section 10 – Intensive goat production systems

Table 10.1: Dairy goats should be allocated at least 2m² and up to 2.5m² each, due to their large size. As these are guidelines they should represent best practice or at least more than the bare minimum. The current space allocations are not sufficient for adult goats generally (should be 2m²).

Section 11 – Humane killing

S11.5 – Please amend to the following: A person killing a kid by a blow to the forehead must ensure that the kid is *less than 24 hours old*. *Blunt trauma must only be used* when there is no firearm, captive bolt or lethal injection reasonably available.

G11.5 – Please also add that the animal should be suitably restrained in a comfortable upright position (normal standing or sitting position), not hoisted or shackled by a leg for example. Loss of consciousness can be delayed and may or may not produce immediate collapse. The neck should not be over extended. Please also amend the “note” under G11.5 to say that the spinal cord should not be severed, as this can lead to intense pain until loss of consciousness ensues.

Glossary.

The definition of animal welfare is an old-fashioned one in that it only refers to maintaining homeostasis and coping with the animal’s environment. A more modern definition takes into account the animal’s need to also have positive experiences and express innate behaviour. A broader definition of animal welfare that is generally agreed now is: “how an animal experiences its life in terms of physical functioning and mental state”. A suggested amendment to the definition is: “The state of an animal and how well it is coping with the conditions in which it lives, *including its physical functioning and mental state*”.

Contact:

Dr Melanie Latter
Veterinary Affairs Manager
Australian veterinary Association
Melanie.latter@ava.com.au