

INTRODUCING NEW GOATS

BY TAMSIN COOPER

Goat relationships are crucial for maintaining harmony. Introducing unfamiliar goats can be traumatic, and fighting and stress lead to health risks and drops in productivity. Even after a short separation, goats will fight to re-establish hierarchy. It is important to get this right from the start.

Existing Companionship

When starting your herd, try to get goats who are already long-term companions:

- female relatives (sisters or mother and daughters);
- wethers from the same nursery group;
- a buck with wethers from his nursery group.

Unfamiliar Goats

Two lone goats may accept each other due to loneliness, or one may bully the other mercilessly. Experiences vary based on personality, age, sex, past experience, and unique herd dynamics. Goats of similar breed/appearance may tolerate one another more easily. Gentler breeds tend to be more accommodating than goats highly bred for production.

Whereas kids readily befriend each other, adults are more hostile, and an adult female may viciously reject an unknown kid. Bucks and wethers are normally tolerant of new kids. A wether may welcome a female, but she may not be keen on him. Does normally welcome new bucks if they are in season, and bucks are always happy to have new does! Goats used to lower ranks slip easier into a low-profile position, but bullied goats can turn into bullies given the chance. Nursing mothers direct less aggression toward newcomers than dry, pregnant does.



When two or more companion goats are introduced into an established herd, the new goats receive fewer attacks and injuries than a single new goat.

Introducing goats at pasture allows newcomers to still feed without confronting residents; separate pastures allow goats to familiarize through a fence beforehand.

TIPS FOR LEAST STRESSFUL INTRODUCTIONS

- ✓ Introduce newcomers in groups of companions;
- ✓ Introduce after kidding;
- ✓ First familiarize across a barrier;
- ✓ Introduce at pasture;
- ✓ Provide raised areas and hiding places;
- ✓ Allow space to escape conflict;
- ✓ Spread out food, water, and beds;
- ✓ Monitor behavior.

