

Agri Plain Talk

Doing right in goat dairying

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We attended last week the presentation of results of a study on the performance of Saanen goats as dairy animals under the collaborative effort of the Alaminos Goat Farm in Laguna, the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCARRD) and the National Dairy Authority.

The research recorded the daily milk production of some 40 well selected Saanen goats on the milking line at the Alaminos Goat Farm from September 1, 2009 to March 31, 2010. The finding is that the 40 milkers can produce at least 120 liters of milk a day. The top producer produced 4.11 liters a day during the entire month of last March.

Now, before every one else jumps into goat dairying, it is important to get familiar with the fine points of producing goat's milk. Like what our friend Rene Almeda keeps emphasizing, the selection of high-performing animals is very important. This could significantly improve profits in the long run. For instance, when they were starting to milk their animals, before culling what did not meet their standard, they were milking 60 animals to produce 120 liters of milk. Today, with an elite herd, they only need 40 animals to produce the 120 liters a day that they have been producing before. This means that with well selected animals, they spend less on feeds and housing to produce their target milk yield.

Another observation was the provision of concentrate feed containing 18 percent protein. They have observed that increasing the protein content by just two percent, the milk yield significantly increased.

Another is the provision of nutritious green feeds. One is the indigofera, a leguminous tree that has 24.5 percent protein content and is easy to propagate by seed. It produces a lot of leaves that are relished by the animals. Other forage crops are malunggay, mulberry, centrosema and napier. For best results, the napier has to be cut not more than 45 days from the previous cutting. This will ensure digestibility of the grass.

There are fine points to observe. The green feeds are not dumped in big quantities all at one time.

They are given in small but frequent doses so that almost everything is consumed. The animals are also fed at night for best results.

The Almedas also have a practical way of ensuring enough green feed for their animals. They have made 31 plots of forage crops. Each day, they harvest from one plot. By the time they have harvested the 31st plot, the first plot would be ready for harvest.

These small details are very important. If you plan to get into goat dairying, better do it right by mastering the fine points. Be observant. Do your own research, if possible. Be a hands-on goat raiser.