

Goats

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"browsers," and not as well adapted to grass grazing as cows and sheep, the goal is to see if natural grazing is more advantageous. The latter allows goats to follow their instinctual feeding patterns - they tend to like brush and various types of plants and grasses - rather than limiting them to a grass diet.

Trying to recreate a natural grazing atmosphere has proven quite labor-intensive for Doolan and VanVlaanderen, however, requiring them to move a portable electric fence every 12 to 24 hours. Doolan said the study should indicate whether the extra work is worthwhile. If indeed simulating natural grazing translates into greater milk productivity, Doolan said she would probably install electric fencing throughout the brush areas of the farm.

Each of the couple's 35 goats has a name and a "unique personality," said Doolan. Not only do they know each of the animals' names, but even little Zoe

can tell them apart.

Of the grant-writing process, Doolan said it is fairly easy and straightforward. The one-year grant will pay for testing the goats' milk as well as some equipment, including "a fancy weed-whacker," said Doolan, which will come in handy to clear paddocks for electric fencing.

Helen Husher, a spokeswoman for SARE, said the program's annual grants are "very competitive." Nearly \$200,000 worth of research grants were recently awarded to northeastern dairy farmers, she said.

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