

The objective of this study was not to study the economics of grazing goats but to study the two grazing methods. However, it seems worthwhile to make note of the information we have. During winter months, our does and yearlings consumed 25 to 30 bales of hay per week. When milking in February, March, and half of April, we fed 4 pounds of concentrate per day. Once we started grazing, the hay consumption dropped to about 2 bales per week and concentrate down to 3 pounds. The savings in hay alone (at \$2/bale) is \$45-\$55 per week over at least 25 weeks. This would be a feed savings of \$1000 - \$1125 on hay for our 20 milking does.

The costs of grazing include setting up the fencing and watering infrastructure. Costs to a farm would be very individual depending on the layout of the land. There are also maintenance costs to the fencing, since the electronet does not last forever. We will plan to replace 1-2 fence lengths per year (\$150-\$300).

Grazing goats may be more labor intensive than keeping them in confinement, especially the way we do it currently with setting paddocks with many strands of portable net fencing. However, we spend much less time handling hay and cleaning the barn than we would if our goats were inside. To tip the labor balance in our favor we plan to move to more permanent fencing and try using larger paddocks.

And of course, that which is not easily economically quantifiable is the health and happiness of our animals. They enjoy being outside, even at night, and they survive all kinds of summer weather with minimal complaints. I would also say that our goats eating browse, climbing trees, and leaping from ledges, have an added vitality over those merely chewing grass or clover in a flat pasture paddock with nothing more exciting to jump over than the fence.

6. Outreach Plan

We hosted a pasture walk this summer sponsored by the Vermont GrassFarmers, the Small Ruminant Dairy Project, and NOFA-VT.

Bill Murphy brought a UVM class on a field trip to our farm so we could describe the project.

We are having an article published in the MOFGA newsletter and possibly the Dairy Goat Journal this spring summarizing the findings.

Bill Murphy will present the findings at the VT GrassFarmers Conference in February and I will be a member of a farmer panel for question and answers.

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