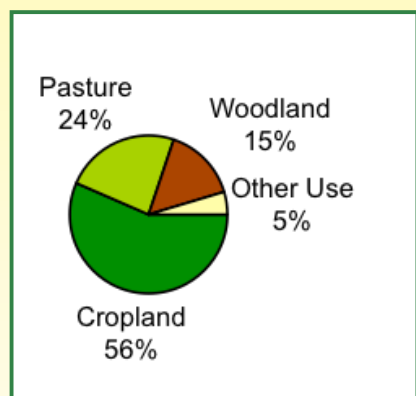


Evaluating the Performance and Grazing Behavior of Meat Goats in Missouri Woodlands

Lincoln University Cooperative Extension and Research (LUCER) has created a demonstration field that shows the added value of using goats to control weeds and improve soil fertility.

Land Use in Missouri MASS 2007



Cooperative Extension and Research



In 2013, Missouri had the fifth largest meat goat industry in the United States. This was based on the number of meat goats that were produced for consumption. The report came from the Agricultural Statistics Board of the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), a part of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Lincoln University Cooperative Extension and Research (LUCER) faculty study how goats might be used to control unwanted underbrush in woodlands.

In 2011, LUCER launched three sites to study how goats control brush in woodlands. These sites are the Elsberry Plant Material Center, Crowder College and Lincoln University's Alan T. Busby Farm.

Silvopasture is an age-old agricultural practice. It combines forestry and the grazing of animals in a way that benefits both. When managed properly, the production of timber, livestock and forage can be cost effective and environmentally friendly.



Project goats walk the perimeter of a woody paddock to evaluate the work they have ahead.

Fifteen percent of Missouri farmland is wooded. Goats can be used to control the brush within these woodlands. This opens up the woods for forage crops, grazing or other agriculture uses. With good management practices, the goats can be finished to market weight in the woodlands during summer and fall. They can be sold when prices rise; and they will not need much, if any, extra feed. Research is being done to see if this practice will reduce the carbon imprint (greenhouse gas emission) and soil erosion. LUCER faculty are also studying whether this increases soil fertility and water retention.

Goats are natural browsers. They prefer to eat a variety of woody brush or bramble-type invasive plants. Goats eat multiflora rose, wild blackberries, locust, poison ivy, kudzu, honeysuckle, buckthorn and some thistles.

A goat demonstration field station located at Lincoln University using goats to control weeds and improve soil fertility.

Goats raised on browse also appeal to consumers; they often prefer a meat product that has been fed naturally.

Goat meat is a good source of protein; it is consumed by 80 percent of the world's cultures. At this time, the U.S. supply does not meet the demand.

This study was made possible by a USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) grant. It was also funded by the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). The project is a joint effort with Langston University, Crowder College and the NRCS. It is the first of its kind in Missouri to look at the browsing behavior and benefits of goats and, also, sheep. Factors affecting goat health are being studied. Soil fertility, native plants and wildlife are also being researched. A few silvopasture management schemes are being tried to find the best. Work is being done to develop a crossbreed of goat with improved resistance to parasites. It will also be bred to gain weight efficiently in woodlands.

