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## **MEAT GOAT CFO DETERMINATIONS**

**Operational Guideline 2016-9**

**Agricultural Operation Practices Act  
November 10, 2016**

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## 1. Introduction

This policy provides operators and NRCB staff with guidance for determining under what conditions a meat goat operation should be considered a confined feeding operation (CFO) and require a permit under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* (AOPA).

All operations that meet the definition of a CFO and exceed the AOPA thresholds are required to have an AOPA permit. Schedule 2 of the *Agricultural Operations, Part 2 Matters Regulation* sets the threshold for meat/milk goats at 200 animals.<sup>1</sup>

How livestock are managed will determine whether an operation meets the definition of a confined feeding operation. Meat goats<sup>2</sup> are typically raised and managed differently than beef cattle and other livestock species. As a result, a meat goat farm should not be compared with other livestock operations to determine whether it is a CFO and requires an AOPA permit. Section 3.2 sets out the criteria for meat goat facilities that are CFOs under AOPA.

The purpose of this guide is to provide information on how meat goats are raised, and to thereby help approval officers and stakeholders determine whether a meat goat facility, or a part of a meat goat facility, is a CFO that requires a permit.

This guide was developed in consultation with Agriculture and Forestry and meat goat producers in Alberta.

## 2. Typical management of meat goat operations

### 2.1 Breeding herd and gestation

- The breeding herd consists of does, bucks, replacement does, and un-weaned kids. The typical ratio of does to bucks is 25 to one.
- Does are bred for the first time at two years of age.
- Does are typically bred either on pasture during the late summer and fall, or in pens, starting in August or September.
- Goats have a five and a half month gestation period.
- Kidding (birthing) generally takes place between February and May.
- The average birthrate is 1.5 kids per doe.
- The mortality rate for kids is generally 15 to 17 per cent within the first two months after birth.

### 2.2 Breeding herd management

- The majority of meat goat breeding operations raise only one crop of kids per year.
- Kids are weaned at four months of age (normally in June or July in southern Alberta, and in August or September in northern Alberta). Weaned offspring are normally sold shortly after being weaned or are fed for two to four months before being sold.

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1. The threshold for nannies/billies is 400 animals and for goat feeders is 500 animals. Milk goats are normally housed. Milk goat and goat feeder facilities are automatically considered CFOs and require a permit if they are above threshold.

2. Does and nannies are female goats. Bucks and billies are male goats. Kids are young goats, usually less than six months of age, and bucklings are immature male goats.

- Doelings (immature female goats) are either kept for replacements for the breeding herd, or are sold shortly after they are weaned.
- Bucklings are normally sold for slaughter either after weaning at 50 to 60 pounds, or are kept two to four additional months in pens where they are fed and then sold for slaughter at 80 to 100 pounds. In northern Alberta, the last of the bucklings may be marketed as late as mid-January.

### **2.3 Pens, pasture and forage**

- Typically, meat goat producers try to maximize the use of pasture within their operations.
- Goats prefer to browse and graze on non-grass species. Pens therefore normally include bale type feeders, and it is not uncommon for grass to be growing in a portion of the pen.
- When let out into pasture, goats like to forage and graze for two or three hours in the morning and return to their pen over the mid-day period. In the later afternoon, they forage and graze for another two to three hours before returning to their pen to overnight. Their typical feed is mainly hay or grazing material.
- Does are pastured for a two to three month period between June and October (after the kids are weaned and before they are bred).
- Replacements for the breeding herd are generally let out onto pasture during the day, when pasture is available, and are penned at night.

### **2.4 Overwintering**

- Only the breeding herd and replacements are normally overwintered.

## **3. Key factors for a meat goat CFO**

### **3.1 Facilities that are not considered CFOs**

- Facilities used for overnight penning—overnight penning is a normal management practice for pasturing goats. Meat goats are generally let out to forage on pasture during the day and are penned at night. The purpose of the housing area is not for feeding, but for safety when they rest or sleep. Overnight penning is therefore not considered confinement for “feeding,” and the pens are not considered CFO facilities.
- Breeding facilities—facilities used to exclusively confine does for short periods of time for breeding (typically two to three weeks) are not considered CFO facilities.
- Pasture—pasture is never considered a CFO facility.
- Overwintering facilities—typically, meat goat producers do not overwinter goats other than the breeding herd, offspring that has not been weaned, and replacements for the breeding herd. Overwintering facilities for a meat goat breeding herd, including its un-weaned offspring and breeding herd replacements, are not considered to be CFO facilities.
- Kidding barns—used for short duration during kidding. Kidding barns are used to provide a “mothering up” timeframe for new born kids and their mothers. The does and new born young are placed in small individual pens to allow the new born time to gain strength before being placed outside. These temporary use barns are not considered CFO facilities.

**3.2 Facilities that are considered CFOs**

- Facilities that are used to confine and feed meat goats (other than for overnight penning or for a short period of time for breeding) are considered to be CFOs.
- Meat goat CFOs that meet or exceed the livestock thresholds in AOPA are required to have a permit.

Contact the Natural Resources Conservation Board at the following offices. Dial 310.0000 to be connected toll free.

**Edmonton Office**

4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Sterling Place  
9940 - 106 Street  
Edmonton AB T5K 2N2  
T 780-422-1977

**Airdrie Office**

Airdrie Agriculture Regional Centre  
97 East Lake Ramp NE  
Airdrie AB T4A 0C3  
T 403-340-5241

**Lethbridge Office**

Agriculture Centre  
100, 5401 - 1 Avenue S  
Lethbridge AB T1J 4V6  
T 403-381-5166

**Morinville Office**

Provincial Building  
201, 10008 - 107 Street  
Morinville AB T8R 1L3  
T 780-939-1212

**Red Deer Office**

Provincial Building  
303, 4920 - 51 Street  
Red Deer AB T4N 6K8  
T 403-340-5241

NRCB Reporting Line: 1.866.383.6722

Email: [info@nrcb.ca](mailto:info@nrcb.ca)

Web address: [www.nrcb.ca](http://www.nrcb.ca)

Copies of the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* can be obtained from the Queen's Printer at [www.qp.gov.ab.ca](http://www.qp.gov.ab.ca) or through the NRCB website.

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