

NEW YORK STATE 4-H MEAT GOAT PROJECT FACT SHEET #11



By Dr. E. A. B. Oltenacu
Revised April 1999 by Dr. tatiana Stanton
Cornell University, Ithaca , NY 14853

TEETH AND AGE OF THE GOAT

The eight teeth in the lower front jaw of your goat can help you to tell his age. They are not an exact or perfect guide, as various factors such as diet will influence the growth of teeth. Also, every goat is an individual just like you and your friends. Remember, not all your baby teeth fell out at the same time as those of other children in your classes. A goat's teeth may grow and fall out at slightly different ages than the teeth of any other goat. There are no upper front teeth in the goat's mouth, instead your wether has a tough toothless "dental pad". Your goat does have teeth on the top and bottom of his jaw further back in his mouth. These back teeth help him to chew his cud. We do not use these to tell his age.

First year (kid)



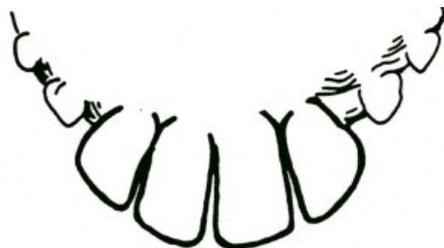
All teeth are small and sharp. They will gradually be replaced by larger, permanent teeth, and this process is used to help determine the age of the goat.

Second year (yearling)

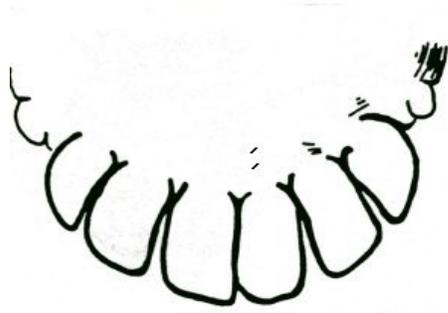


The goat loses the two middle front teeth when it is around 12 months old, and they are replaced by larger, permanent teeth.

Third year (2-3 year-old)

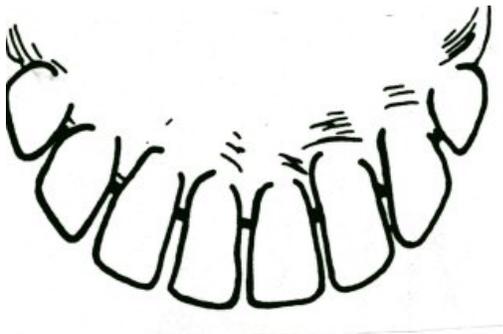


The teeth next to the middle pair are replaced by permanent teeth when the goat is about 24 months old.



Fourth year (4 year-old)

The goat now has six permanent teeth, with only one pair of kid teeth remaining.



Fifth year (4 year-old and over)

The set of 8 front teeth is complete. The age of the goat beyond 5 years must be guessed at from the amount of wear on the teeth. This is very variable, and diet has a big effect. Goats on a rough, coarse diet will grind their teeth away faster than does on an easily eaten diet. Does grazing on rough pasture will show considerable wear sooner than barn-fed does on a better quality ration. Teeth spread, loosen and finally drop out as the goat ages.

Suggested Activities

- 1) Visit a local goat breeder's herd and estimate the ages of animals in the herd. Then check your estimates against the records that show each goat's actual age.
- 2) Make a collection of lower jaws (properly prepared) from goats that have died or been slaughtered for meat. Prepare an exhibit to show at, for example, county fair.
- 3) Discover how the teeth of the goat compare with other species (cattle, sheep, etc.) as they age. What about people?