



## CASE STUDY 2: Implementing component feeding for meat production with the Vingerhoeds family

Because of the high capital investment required for some feeding programs, smaller herds and many meat goat producers often do things a little differently. When it comes to nutrition in Peter and Amy Vingerhoeds' meat goat herd, reducing possible waste and feeding for production are top priorities.

Does nursing multiple two-month old kids are really milking heavy to keep up to the kid's growth, explains Amy. "Lactating does require hay of the best quality, preferably second cut."

Feed refusals from the lactating group are pushed to the dry does' pen before the next feeding starts, so basically no feed is wasted. Component feeding is a nutritional management approach where hay and grains are fed individually instead of mixed together. For the Vingerhoeds' herd, hay is fed first. Then, the goats receive a custom pellet that is high in fiber (wheat shorts), as well as a grain ration mixed with corn, canola and a mineral premix. "Does need to eat forage to keep their rumen functioning, but dry does have lower requirements so they don't need the extra protein and nutrients that high quality hay offers," says Peter. "Straw is included in the diet of dry does to achieve the intake required on a lower

plane of nutrition." In every feeding, each doe is offered an average of 0.7 kg (1.5 lb) of hay at 5:30 am and 3:30 pm to kick-start their rumen. Two hours after feeding hay, Amy pours 0.5 kg (1 lb) of the custom pellet and 0.2 to 0.5 kg of their grain ration for each doe, depending on stage of gestation/lactation. Each doe in the group has access to her feed through a 'tombstone headgate' which prevent the does from pulling hay out to the pen, another way the Vingerhoeds have adapted the farm to reduce forage waste.



“We used to feed hay in sheep feeders inside the pen. When we expanded we really considered the wasted hay that we were throwing away,” says Amy. “The tombstone headgates are great. I think they’ve reduced our waste from about 20 per cent to nearly nothing.”

The kids are weaned as they are marketed, usually around 120 days at 60 to 70 lbs. To increase the kids’ growth rate, they are introduced to a small amount of pellet at three to four weeks old through the use of a creep-feed area, which is often seen in sheep barns. This creep pen has a small opening that allows kids in, but not does. By about eight weeks, the kids are consuming a considerable amount of pellets.

Peter suggests to producers considering this program, to buy pellet in bulk, or mix their own grain on-farm to reduce costs; he also encourages producers to quantify the wasted feed/hay. Growing your own forage can further reduce production costs.

This case study is part of a series detailing different feed options in Ontario’s goat industry.

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