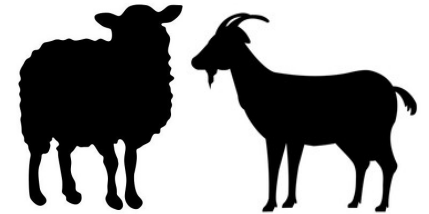


The Nutritional Benefits of Pasture-Raised Sheep & Goats

Better feed, better meat and milk

Sheep and goats are designed to eat plants. However, the animals are sometimes raised in confined conditions and fed a diet high in grain for part or most of their lives. Sheep and goats that are raised outdoors on pasture or range instead of in confinement are able to eat plants and exercise freely. This results in healthier animals ... and more nutritious food for people as well.



Studies show the nutritional value of meat and dairy from sheep and goats is higher when the animals consume grass and forage instead of grain.

Less saturated fat, more heart-healthy polyunsaturated fats

- ▶ Replacing saturated fats with polyunsaturated fats is associated with reduced blood levels of total and LDL cholesterol.
- ▶ Studies suggest that this replacement reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease, including heart attacks, strokes, and related deaths.

**Better
Fat
Quality**

Lower ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 polyunsaturated fats

- ▶ Omega-6 fats are generally more inflammatory than omega-3 fats. Research suggests a lower ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fats is more desirable and may improve cognitive function and reduce the risk of many chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease and cancer.
- ▶ Long-chain omega-3 fatty acids can improve neural health and result in lower total mortality.
- ▶ Conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), a natural fatty acid found in milk, has shown efficacy against cancer, obesity, and atherosclerosis.

**Increase
in
Nutrients**

Higher levels of vitamin E and vitamin A

- ▶ Vitamin E is an antioxidant and protects cells from free radicals.
- ▶ Vitamin A is critical for normal vision and immune function.

By the numbers...

Compared to animals fed grain, meat & dairy from sheep & goats raised 100% on pasture have up to:

**3x more
omega-3
fats**

**2x more
long-chain
omega-3s**

**1.8x more
conjugated
linoleic acid
(CLA)**

**85% lower
omega-6:
omega-3
ratio**

**1.7x
higher poly-
unsaturated:
saturated
fat ratio**

**2.3x more
vitamin E**

**1.4x more
vitamin A**

The how & why

Sheep and goats are ruminant animals. This means that they have stomachs with four compartments, the largest of which is called the rumen. The rumen is a fermentation chamber where fibrous grasses are digested by bacteria to produce high quality protein (i.e. meat and milk).

Forages are the edible parts of plants other than grain and include pasture vegetation and grasses. They are good sources of beneficial omega-3 fats. In contrast, grains such as corn are dominated by more inflammatory omega-6 fats. Due to the way sheep and goats digest their food, they are able to convert the beneficial fat and nutrients in plants into more nutritious meat and milk for people.

In addition, sheep and goats that live outside on pasture exercise more than confined animals do. This factor likely contributes to muscle development and results in increased protein.



Shopping for meat & dairy

Grass-fed meat signifies that only grass was fed to the sheep or goat. The USDA's "100% grass-fed" claim may be applied to meat from animals that were fed only 100% grass (forage) without grain or grain by-products. The USDA's staff reviews supporting documentation supplied by the company making the claim, but third-party inspections are not completed and humane standards are not considered in the grass-fed claim.

Grass-fed dairy implies that only grass was fed to the sheep or goats. However, the FDA does not tightly define this term or require on-farm inspections to verify the claim. While many farms use the term with integrity, it is possible that "grass-fed" can be used to label conventional milk that came from animals that were fed both grain and grass.

"Pasture-raised" suggests pasture was included in the animal's diet. However, there is no standard diet requirement and on-farm inspections are not required to verify the claim. Because these claims are not 100% reliable, look for third party verified labels, or a farm that uses humane practices but may not be certified due to the costs involved. Learn more at foodanimalconcernstrust.org/food-labels



The Bottom Line

Pasture-raised animals produce nutritionally superior food for people. In addition to the nutritional advantages, there are many animal welfare and environmental benefits associated with pasture-based animal agriculture. Please consider supporting your local family farmers who raise their animals humanely on grass and well-managed pasture.

FACT

Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT) is a national nonprofit organization that works to ensure that all food-producing animals are raised in a humane and healthy manner. FACT offers grants, scholarships, webinars and a mentorship program for livestock and poultry farmers and ranchers who wish to raise their animals on pasture.

www.FoodAnimalConcernsTrust.org

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