

incorporate recent developments in biosecurity, as few farms can operate a closed-flock breeding policy.

With particular reference to animal welfare, the section on obstetrics, including uterine prolapse replacement, fails to mention the advantages offered by sacrococcygeal extradural lignocaine/xylazine injection; instead, it recommends hauling the ewe up by its hindlegs during dystocia correction. Few veterinary practitioners now use soap flakes in preference to obstetrical lubricant; the absence of disposable plastic arm-length gloves during obstetrical manipulation is surprising. Colour photographs are essential, as much detail is lost in the black and white reproductions detailing caesarean operation in the ewe.

Mr Straiton is to be complimented on his continued enthusiasm to share his considerable practical experience with farmers and undergraduate students but I believe that new technologies offer more effective methods of conveying the essential information contained in this book. Regularly updated web sites featuring high-quality digital images detailing immediate problems are the future in information transfer, and such facilities are presently available. Agricultural economics change monthly, but the lack of discussion of veterinary fee structure in relation to individual sheep market value in this book ignores important welfare concerns. For example, few ovine dystocias are corrected by caesarean operation — farmers frequently leave such sheep to die without veterinary attendance. Why? While it may not be within the remit of this book to tackle such contentious issues, the current foot-and-mouth disease crisis in the United Kingdom has highlighted the veterinary profession's ignorance of repeated unnecessary auction and long-distance transport of sheep. There are many other welfare concerns in the UK sheep industry but few veterinary practitioners appear to be concerned. Although this book may contain some inaccuracies, Mr Straiton cares about sheep and has an enviable reputation as a man of sound practical advice.

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### ***Practical Goat Keeping***

A Mowlem (2001). Published by The Crowood Press Ltd, The Stable Block, Crowood Lane, Ramsbury, Marlborough, Wiltshire SN8 2HR, UK; <http://www.crowood.com>. 160 pp. Hardback (ISBN 1 86126 389 9). Price £16.99.

Goats are inquisitive, friendly and intelligent animals that tend to evoke tremendous enthusiasm in their keepers. This passion has spawned a number of highly anecdotal goat texts, written by authors whose enthusiasm is perhaps not matched by their in-depth knowledge or breadth of experience. Written by a goat keeper of some 30 years experience (which includes the running of a large commercial dairy herd), Alan Mowlem's book *Practical Goat Keeping* breaks this mould. Providing a comprehensive and accurate guide to all aspects of modern goat keeping, it covers commercial dairy farming and meat production, as well as the keeping of one or two goats as pets.

The book is split into 11 chapters, starting with the characteristics of the various breeds and leading through housing, nutrition, reproduction, health and disease. Each chapter concludes with key points that reinforce the crucial issues. There is a chapter by Hilary Matthews, a highly respected breeder of pedigree British Saanen goats, covering goat-showing. The first chapter describes various breeds and the requirements and pitfalls of goat-keeping, including essential questions for would-be goat-keepers such as "have I got the

time?”, “have I got the room?”, and “can I afford it?” Careful consideration of these questions would eliminate many of the welfare problems seen in goats purchased as impulse buys at livestock markets. In the chapter on “Goats for meat”, the author raises the economic issues of rearing goats for food. With the frequently uncertain fate of goats sold live for meat in this country, it is important that any aspiring rearer of male kids is aware of the difficulties both of making a profit and of finding a suitable market. In most cases, sadly, the humane destruction of unwanted males at birth must be the preferable option.

Goat diseases are comprehensively covered, with the exception of respiratory disease in kids — a common problem in many commercial dairy herds, particularly where environmental conditions are sub-optimal. I would also take issue with the author’s comment that foot rot is not usually a big problem with goats, as the effects of this disease in commercial dairy herds can be devastating economically. Furthermore, serious welfare problems may occur as a result of this disease. Alan presents a comprehensive list of poisonous plants that may harm goats. In practice, 98 per cent of all the goat poisonings I see are caused by rhododendron, and the frequency of this problem merits consideration in this text.

Although the contents of the book are a welcome departure from the “comfrey leaves and nettles” concept, sadly the presentation is not. Apart from the full-colour cover, open the book and you could be looking at a 1960s tome. Moreover, Alan’s skills with livestock are not matched by his expertise with the camera. A number of the many black and white photos are poorly focused and/or badly reproduced. On a number of occasions, the subject matter of the shots could not be guessed at without the written help of the description. Other photos might best be replaced by more of the very clear line-drawings used from time to time. Ultimately, of course, this is not designed as a coffee-table book, and these aesthetic shortcomings do not detract significantly from the overall value of the book.

I felt that the chapter on diet somewhat lost its way, and I wonder who this chapter is aimed at. Commercial stock-keepers would require a greater depth of knowledge of ration formulation, whereas the small goat keeper is not likely to be interested in ME, UDP and crude fibre. A reference chart of sample rations and quantities fed to goats of different sizes and life-stages would, I feel, be of much more use to the amateur goat keeper. The demands of commercial milking are probably beyond the remit of this book. Nonetheless, there is still much valuable information here on the principles of goat nutrition and on the feedstuffs that are available in the UK.

All in all, this is a concise, well-written and easily read text that provides a comprehensive and accurate guide to goat keeping. Most of the welfare problems I see in practice are the result of ignorance coupled with a lack of knowledge of where to find appropriate information. This book provides that information and, as such, it should be considered essential reading for anyone considering keeping goats — preferably to be purchased *before* they take the plunge. Veterinary and agricultural students interested in the species will also find it a quick and efficient way of assimilating knowledge that has taken others tens of years in the field to accumulate.

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